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THE APPROACH TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

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MARGARET, MABEL AND MAUD

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PREFACE

IN the opening article of the Revised Edition of the *New Standard Bible Dictionary* I have ventured to argue that there are four ways of approaching the Bible: there is the literary, the historical, the critical, and the religious approach. This volume deals more particularly with the critical approach. It is an attempt to explain and justify the ways of modern criticism in its attitude to the Bible.

People unacquainted with the literature of criticism are apt to derive their impressions of it from the representations or misrepresentations of it by its opponents. By presenting the relevant facts in a just light I have sought, on the one hand, to win for the Bible the allegiance of those whom the traditional apologetic has alienated, and, on the other, to win for the modern view of the Bible those whom misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the critical position has misled. To this end I have illustrated the methods by which that position has been reached, and set forth the main results of the reconstruction which has made the Bible more human and not less divine. My hope is that the sense of emancipation, illumination, and joy which the new outlook upon the Bible has already brought to so many, may be still more widely shared. Those who cherish the liberty for which Christ set

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them free and who refuse to be entangled again in any yoke of bondage to an indefensible traditionalism (Gal. v. 1) will acknowledge with a deeper gladness than ever that the Bible is a lamp to their feet and a light to their path.

Incidentally I have dealt with the religious approach to the Old Testament: I hope on some later occasion to develop this more fully.

JOHN E. McFADYEN

AYR,
3rd July, 1926

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THE APPROACH TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

VERBAL INSPIRATION

“EVERY book of the Bible, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High.” These words were uttered by Dean Burgon from the University pulpit at Oxford not much more than half a century ago. They constitute a stupendous claim: can it be substantiated? Let us examine it in the light of indubitable facts.

There might be some meaning in the Dean's dogmatic utterance, if we could be quite sure that there was anywhere in the world to-day an authentic reproduction of the words in question. But nothing is more certain than that the autographs of every book of Old and New Testament alike have vanished beyond all hope—indeed, we may safely say, beyond all possibility—of recovery. The oldest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament that we possess are between two and three hundred years later than the days of the evangelists and apostles who wrote the books which constitute it, while the oldest certainly dated manuscript of any considerable part of the Hebrew Old Testament, a manuscript of the prophets, whose date is A.D. 916, is separated by from fourteen to seventeen hundred years from the men whose words it

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records. It is customary for such champions of verbal inspiration as are willing to admit the existence or at least the possibility of errors or defects in modern translations or existing manuscripts to maintain that at any rate the original autographs were inerrant and infallible. But to make any assertion whatever about the autographs is a piece of sheer dogmatism, for the simple reason that we do not possess them: no man has seen them for nearly two, and in some cases for nearly three, thousand years.

The extant manuscripts of the New Testament differ at hundreds of points from one another—very seldom indeed on matters of importance, but frequently in spelling and sometimes even in the words: who is to tell us which of these readings is verbally inspired? With regard to the Old Testament, the most cursory glance at Kittel's Hebrew text, especially in difficult books like Job or Ezekiel, or still more at Nestle's very elaborate critical conspectus of the text of Jeremiah, is enough to show the immense uncertainty which besets much of the detail of the text—though of course the substance of it is usually clear enough—and the sheer impossibility, in many cases, of reaching with absolute confidence the ultimate textual truth. The Greek Version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint and usually referred to as LXX, which is our oldest witness to the text and carries us back over two thousand years, presupposes at numberless points a different Hebrew text from the traditional Hebrew text which we

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possess. The Greek text of Jeremiah, e.g., is shorter than the Hebrew text by about 2,700 words, roughly an eighth: which of these is to be regarded as verbally inspired?

But, so far at any rate as the Old Testament is concerned, even if we were in possession of the autographs, we should not be much further on; Dean Burgon's assertion would still remain a piece of meaningless dogmatism. For the original Hebrew text contained only consonants. The verbal inspiration which is claimed for the autographs would apply only to the consonants, not to the vowels, which were only added in the Christian era; and to assert that the Jewish scholars who added the vowels were inspired to add them correctly would be another piece of dogmatism, for which there is not and there cannot be any possible shadow of proof. The consonants D B R, e.g., may mean, according to the vowels which accompany them, either *word*, or *speaking*, or *he spoke*, or *speak*, or *pestilence*. It is therefore obvious that, theoretically at least, on the basis of the consonantal text, large possibilities of interpretation are open. Think, e.g., of the English words that might be written round the two consonants F R—*far*, *fair*, *fare*, *fairy*, *fear*, *ferry*,¹ *fir*, *fire*, *fiery*, *for*, *fore*, *four*, *foray*, *fur*, *fury*, *furry*¹ *fray*, *free*, *fry*, *fro*, *afar*, *affair*,¹ *affray*, *offer*. Again the three consonants B R D would yield *bard*, *bared*, *beard*,

¹ Words with double *f* or *r* may here be included for illustration's sake, as in Hebrew these letters would be written only once.

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bewrayed, bird, bread, breed, bride, brood, board, bored, aboard, broad, abroad. Again, P R S T might be *parasite, priest, opprest* (Amer.) or *pursuit*. Of course, in the vast majority of cases there would be no dubiety whatever, the context would reduce the possibilities to a single one; and Pitman's phonetic shorthand, written in the reporting style which dispenses with vowels, is proof enough that a vowelless script is seldom exposed to the risk of serious misinterpretation. Still, there are cases where in the context there may be two equally legitimate interpretations of the consonantal text. The consonants M T H e.g., when read as *mittah* mean *bed*, when read as *matteh* they mean *staff*. In the Hebrew consonantal text of Gen. xlvii. 31, we are told that the dying Jacob "bowed himself upon the head of the M T H ;" the vowels interpret this to mean "on the head of the *bed* "; but the Greek translation, which is followed by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 21) took it to mean "on the top of the (i.e., his) *staff*." Both meanings are possible and reasonable: who is to decide which is "verbally inspired" ?

A verse which illustrates still better the ambiguity created by the absence of vowels is Eccles. iii. 21. A. V. translates, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth ?" R. V. "Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward ?" etc. The context which sadly maintains that man has

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no pre-eminence above the beasts, their final destiny being the same (vv. 19*f.*) makes it practically certain that A.V., which distinguishes between their destinies, is wrong, and that R.V., which has the support of the Greek version, is right. The explanation is simple. The article and the interrogative particle are both represented by the same consonant (*h*); they only differ—and that but slightly—in the accompanying vowel. The vowel of the printed Hebrew text robs the passage of its scepticism, and was doubtless selected in the interests of orthodoxy. The power of the wrong vowel to transform the meaning was recently brought home to me by a painful experience. In my review of a book I had written, “He has the art of presenting controversial matter in an irenical spirit”: unhappily the *e* was printed as an *o*—doubtless to the chagrin of the author as well as of the reviewer.

But even the consonantal text itself is sometimes uncertain. This uncertainty is created by the fact that several letters of the Hebrew alphabet are very much alike, differing only by a “tittle,” e.g., ב *b*, and כ *k*, ד *d* and ר *r*, or by some other slight distinction, e.g., ה *h* and ח *ch*, ו *w*, ז *z*, and ן final *n*, ס *s* and ם final *m*. Some of these similarities occasionally give rise to serious dubiety, in one case even two different countries being confused, *Edom* and *Aram* (the *Syria* of the English Versions), whose consonantal outlines אדם and ארם are alike in all but the “tittle.”

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An illustration of the distortion of meaning that may result from a confusion of consonants came under my notice recently in a letter written by a father about his newly-married daughter. What he wrote was, "the house is so lonely without her"; but the *n* was hardly distinguishable from a *v*, which would have cast rather a lurid light on the daughter's pre-marital behaviour. A curious illustration from the New Testament of the difference that a consonant may make is the famous verse in 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "if I give my body to be burned." For the last three words the margin of the Revised Version reads "that I may glory." The difference in the Greek is just that between θ (*th*) and χ (*ch*).

Sometimes, too, the original text has been exposed to confusion through the similarity in *sound* between different consonants. For as some manuscripts were copied, so others appear to have been written to dictation: and as similarity of outline misled the copyist's eye in the one case, so it misled his ear in the other. A good illustration of this occurs in Psalm xlix. 7, which both in the Authorized and the Revised Version runs, "None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother." The whole point of the psalm is the futility of trusting in wealth: all the money in the world cannot bribe the death-angel to stay away. Now with the "brother" the argument has nothing to do: the point is, not that a man cannot by his money redeem *his brother* from death, but that he cannot redeem *himself*.

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“Brother” is in Hebrew אח *ach*; a word אח with an almost identical sound means “surely”: there is, therefore, practically no doubt that the psalmist wrote the latter word and that the scribe who wrote to dictation confused it with the former word. The meaning would then be: “Surely no man can by any means redeem himself,” which is exactly what the context requires. In the report of an assault, the phrase “they half killed the man” was mistaken, by some of those who heard it, for “they have killed the man.” This shows how gravely the meaning may be affected by an infinitesimal difference in the sound.

There is one peculiarly interesting case in which two quite different words are pronounced in exactly the same way: לו meaning *not*, and לו meaning *to him*, are each pronounced *lo*. Sometimes the accidental substitution of the one word for the other has led to a result which is nothing less than deplorable. In the famous passage of Isaiah (ix. 2-7), so happily selected for the Christmas lesson, whose theme is the birth of a wonderful Child, the Authorized Version reads: “Thou hast multiplied the nation and not increased the joy” (verse 3). Everyone who is following the context with any sympathy or imagination must be painfully struck by the hopelessly inappropriate negative before the word “increased;” the truth is that beyond any question the original word *lo* was not the negative לו but לו meaning *to him*; “Thou hast multiplied the nation and increased the joy to

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him," or to it, i.e., "increased its joy."¹ With this reading everything falls into line, and no discordant note mars the happy harmony of the passage. An equally striking, though less deplorable, confusion occurs in Job (xiii. 15) where the Authorized Version, following the traditional text, makes Job say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That sublime expression of faith is not indeed impossible to Job, but it is as good as impossible in that context and at that stage of the argument. In this case אל *not* should be read for לו *to* or *in Him*, and the translation, which fits in admirably with the context and the mood of Job, should be, "Behold, He is slaying me: I can be patient (or hold out) no longer."

The familiar words of the one hundredth psalm—"it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves"—yield another illustration of the same confusion. The thought expressed by these words is no doubt a thoroughly Hebraic one, but several considerations, e.g., the parallel phrases in Ps. xcv. 5,7, combine to suggest that the אל rendered *not* should be the לו rendered *to Him*—which is actually read by several Hebrew manuscripts: "He has made us and *His* (lit. *to Him*) we are."

In view then of the facts adduced, which could be multiplied a hundred-fold, it is quite clear

¹ Or, in view of the laws of Hebrew parallelism and of the fact that the outlines of the Hebrew words for *nation* and *gladness* are not very dissimilar, the original may have been "Thou hast multiplied its (i.e., the people's, v. 2) *gladness* and increased its joy."

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that the scribe's eye has sometimes been deceived by similarity of outline, and his ear by similarity or identity of sound.

Yet another point has to be remembered. In early times words were not separated, as they are with us: the letters of consecutive words were written continuously. It is not always possible to say with certainty where the break should be made. It may easily happen, e.g., that a letter may be equally well read as the last of one word or the first of the next. If in English, e.g., we had this collection of letters, THEBOOKSHEREAD, it would be impossible, apart from the context, to say whether the *s* is the last letter of *book* or the first of *she*: *the books he read* or *the book she read*. Usually the context would decide the matter, but not invariably or inevitably. Again, it may easily happen that consecutive letters may be treated as one long word or as two shorter ones, and this may lead on occasion to divergent and even diametrically opposite interpretations. For example, how should we interpret the sentence "the book was NOTABLYILLUSTRATED"? Between "*not ably* illustrated" and "*notably* illustrated" it will be admitted that the difference is considerable. The same group of letters may even be susceptible of diametrically opposite meanings, e.g., GODISNOWHERE (God is *nowhere* or *now here*).

Now there are cases in which the words of the Bible, originally written continuously, are exposed to similar ambiguity. An excellent illustration of this occurs in Isaiah viii. 8, "his outstretched

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wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." The Hebrew consonants representing the last four English words written continuously, are ארצכעמנואל. Now *Immanuel* (the last six letters reading towards the left) is really compounded of two Hebrew words—*immanu* (with us) and *el* (God)—and may quite well be a sentence, "with us is God." The fourth letter from the right (*k*) may either be the second pers. sing. pronominal suffix appended to the word for "land" (*thy* land) or a conjunction meaning *for*. The above letters may therefore be read as four words instead of two, thus ארץ כ עמנו אל and the meaning will be, "his outstretched wings shall fill the breadth of *the* land, *for* God is *with* us." In view of v. 10 where the very same words *must* be so rendered (cf A.V. and R.V.) and of the probability of their being here a refrain, as in similar words of Ps. xlii, and in view further of the strangeness of the abrupt appeal to Immanuel, there is little doubt that the rendering of the English Versions is incorrect: at best, the meaning is ambiguous. Another admirable illustration is furnished by Amos vi. 12, "Will one plough *there* with oxen?" As there is no "there" in the Hebrew the sentence is tame precisely at a point where it should be impassioned, as Amos is insisting that the moral order of the world is as inexorable as the physical. Now it happens that the word for "oxen" (usually a collective word in the singular בקר *bqr*) is here written in the plural בקרים, which puts us on the alert; and when we remember that the plural ending ים

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(*im*) is also the consonantal outline of the word for "sea" (*yām*) we can hardly refuse to admit that the five Hebrew consonants represent not one word in the plural, but two (i.e., ים בֶּקֶר ים)—which yield in graphic terms the very sense required: "Can *the sea* be ploughed with oxen?"

As an illustration of the difficulty of deciding where one word ends and the next begins, let us take the group of letters in Hosea vi. 5, rendered in the Authorized Version, "thy judgments *are as* the light *that* goeth forth." The Hebrew letters, as now divided in our Hebrew Bibles, are מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ אֹרֶךְ יָצָא. Two features of this text excite our suspicion: one is that the context (cf. vv. 4 and 6) which represents God Himself as speaking, would lead us to expect "My judgment(s)" rather than "thy judgments," and the other is that the word *as*, which expresses the comparison, is italicized in the English, to indicate that it is absent from the Hebrew. In other words, on the admission of the Authorized Version, the Hebrew reads simply, "thy judgments—light—goeth forth." When we turn to the Septuagint what we find is this, "My judgment shall go forth like the light." This is exactly what the context demands—"My judgment," because God is speaking, and the clear indication of the comparison by the word *as*. Now it is of the greatest interest to note that we get precisely this sense from the Hebrew letters by making the break at a different point, thus:¹

¹ In our present Hebrew texts ך is just the final form of כ (k).

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משפטי כאור יצא. The letter כ (*k*) which begins¹ the second word means *as*, but at the end of a noun it is a suffix meaning *thy*. No one who appreciates the facts can for a moment doubt that the Greek translators divided the words correctly, while the Hebrew text, as we have it, divides them wrongly. The point of all this is that the traditional Hebrew text is not infallible, it is sometimes demonstrably wrong.

The infallibility of the traditional text is further disproved by the existence of undeniable discrepancies between parallel versions of the same incident. Fortunately there are many such parallels both in the Old Testament and in the New, and a careful examination of them is a revelation, on the one hand, of the comparative freedom with which earlier manuscripts were modified by later copyists, and, on the other, of the accidents to which texts were exposed in the process of transcription. Anyone can test this for himself by comparing a chapter in Chronicles with the corresponding chapter of Kings on which it rests. The story of the revolution of Jehoiada which placed Joash upon the throne of Judah, as told in 2 Kings xi and 2 Chron. xxii. 10-xxiii, is most illuminating. The two versions are substantially the same, but with the very significant substitution in Chronicles of Levites for the lay and foreign bodyguard of Kings. "That these men who were both laymen and foreigners were permitted by the high-priest to be within the court of the Temple, was incon-

¹ Hebrew is written from right to left.

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ceivable to the Chronicler;”¹ hence the modification. Canon Girdlestone has greatly facilitated such a comparison by gathering together all the parallel sections in the Old Testament—and they are more numerous than most people imagine—in his book called *Deuterographs*. Sometimes the differences are trivial, as e.g., in the parallel accounts of Sennacherib’s campaign against Jerusalem contained in 2 Kings xviii. 13-xix, 37 and Isaiah xxxvi f. respectively.² Sometimes, however, they are more serious. No unprejudiced person can read side by side the parallel accounts in 2 Kings xx and Isaiah xxxviii of Hezekiah’s recovery from illness together with the miracle which is said to have accompanied it, without being conscious of confusions and discrepancies which call for explanation. In Isaiah the “sign” precedes the recovery, as we should expect (though, curiously enough, the last verse of the chapter harks back again, rather lamely, to the sign): but in Kings the “sign” follows the statement of the recovery. If it be urged that it is hypercritical to attach any significance to this difference in the order of the narrative, it is difficult to believe that the variations in the account of the sign itself are devoid of significance. According to Isaiah, Jehovah, unsolicited, promises to bring back the shadow on the sun-dial ten degrees: according to Kings, He does this in answer to the request of Hezekiah for a sign. But this is a small point: the thing of importance

¹ W. A. L. Elmslie, *Chronicles*, p. 267.

² There is a third version in 2 Chr. xxxii. 1-2

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is that in Kings it is first proposed that the shadow shall move forward ten degrees, and it is only when Hezekiah rejects this as "a light thing" that, in answer to Isaiah's prayer, the shadow is made to move backwards. Doubtless those who pin their faith to harmonistic devices will readily reconcile these divergent accounts by maintaining that the version in Isaiah is an abbreviated account of the incident: but it is difficult to resist the impression that the version in Kings is intended to enhance the wonder of the miracle. But whether we accept this explanation or not, the differences remain, and they are not made less real by the fact that in Isaiah the promise purports to represent the actual words of Jehovah Himself, while in Kings it is the prophet who makes the promise. Which of these versions is it that is verbally inspired?

Sometimes the differences are slight, but obviously deliberate and significant. When the statement in 2 Samuel xxiv. 1, that *Jehovah* moved David to number the people is transformed by the Chronicler into the statement that it was *Satan* who incited him (1 Chron. xxi. 1), we may be sure that the Chronicler had reasons, satisfactory to himself, for the change. But of which of these conflicting statements are we to predicate verbal inspiration? Of both?

The absurdity of such a claim as Dean Burgon's becomes more than ever transparent when we are dealing, not with parallel accounts of the same incident but with parallel versions of words which purport to have been uttered by a particular

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man on a specific occasion. We do not here allude to such obvious duplicates as Psalm xiv and liii, though a comparison of the divergencies between these Psalms, as between e.g. Psalm xl. 13-17, and Psalm lxx. is highly illuminating. But by a piece of singularly good fortune we have in 2 Samuel xxii and Psalm xviii parallel versions of the song of thanksgiving which David is said to have offered "in the day that Jehovah delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies." Between these versions there are over a hundred points of difference, many of which are quite obvious in the English Version, though it is only fair to say that, as a rule, the differences are much slighter in the Hebrew. The key to them is to be found in the circumstance to which we have already alluded of the similarity in outline or in sound subsisting between different consonants. The second half of v. 11, e.g. of 2 Samuel, "he was seen upon the wings of the wind," appears in Psalm xviii. 10, as "he flew upon the wings of the wind." A glance at the Hebrew shows how close these readings are: *he was seen* is רָא, *he flew* is יָדָא: that is to say, the readings differ only by a "tittle." But they do differ. Which is the "inspired" reading? for obviously, in the circumstances, both cannot be original and correct.

The Greek and the Hebrew Old Testament, as we have already pointed out, are frequently at variance, and the Greek, it must be remembered, rests on a Hebrew text. Which of the Hebrew texts is "inspired," ours or theirs? The order of

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the detail in Exodus xxxv-xl differs widely in the Greek and Hebrew, so also does the order of the chapters in the last half of Jeremiah,¹ and there are important differences between the Greek and the Hebrew in the story of David and Goliath (1 Sam. xvii). All this goes to show that, as late as the third century or so B.C., there was no absolutely fixed text of the Old Testament, and it disposes once and for ever of the theory of an immutable and infallible text, a theory which is wholly indefensible in view of innumerable facts familiar to every scholar.

Unquestionably, too, the Greek Version is sometimes correct as against the Hebrew. The Greek text of Jeremiah, e.g., is, as we have said, considerably shorter, and the passages in the Hebrew text that are unrepresented by the Greek are in certain cases demonstrable insertions, the work of men of a later age than Jeremiah and of a very different temper from his. One of the features of the latter days as portrayed in chap. xxxiii is that "the priests the Levites shall not want a man to stand before Me to offer burnt-offerings and to burn oblations, and to do sacrifice continually" (v. 18). We ask in amazement, Is this the Jeremiah who described those days in diametrically opposite terms, as days when all the external and material paraphernalia of religion, even the most famous, the most venerable, the most precious, would be dispensed with, days when men would speak no more of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah,

¹ In the Greek Version chs. xlvi-li follow xxv. 13.

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when it should never enter their minds, when they would neither think of it nor miss it, nor ever again make another (iii. 16), days when these things would be no longer necessary, because religion would be conceived as a spiritual relationship and the law would be written upon the heart (xxxi. 33)? Is this the Jeremiah who stated in passionate and unequivocal terms that in the ancient days of the Exodus, when Jehovah had drawn peculiarly near to Israel in an ever memorable act of redemption and had given her a special revelation of His character and will, He had given "no commandment concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices" (vii. 22), but that then and now and evermore His demand upon Israel was a moral and not a ritual demand? It is a peculiar satisfaction to discover that the whole passage in which occur those words that seem to strike Jeremiah's central message a blow in the face (vv. 14-26) is absent from the Greek Version. There is no shadow of probability that such words were ever uttered by Jeremiah, or that such a hope was cherished by him for the future days: indeed they seem flagrantly and fatally to misrepresent his most characteristic teaching. But they do very adequately express the temper and represent the hopes of later ritualists and legalists, who did not understand the great prophet afar off. Which version of chap. xxxiii is "verbally inspired"—the Hebrew version which inserts, or the Greek Version which omits, words which we can hardly by any stretch of imagination conceive to have been his?

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Nor is the case otherwise with the New Testament. Here too, we have conflicting accounts of the same incident. In Matthew xx. 29ff., we read that, as Jesus was leaving Jericho, He opened the eyes of two blind men who were sitting by the wayside; in Mark x. 46 ff., also as He was leaving Jericho, it was one blind man who received his sight; while in Luke xviii. 35 ff., it is also one blind man, but this time as Jesus approaches Jericho. Here again, of course, harmonistic has no difficulty in working its usual wonders, but it will not succeed in removing from an ingenuous mind the impression that in the three gospels we have different accounts of the same incident. Doubtless in all that matters for religion the accounts are in substantial agreement, but in detail they differ: which of the three versions is the inspired one?

Those whom this illustration leaves unconvinced will have to face other divergences which cannot be so easily circumvented. Everyone knows that there are two versions of the "Sermon on the Mount," but not everyone has noticed how different is the spirit that animates some of the parallel statements. According to Matthew (v. 3) Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," while according to Luke (vi. 20) He said, "Blessed are ye poor." Now it is true that there need be no essential incompatibility between these utterances; for the word rendered "poor" has a long history with a social as well as a spiritual background, and "the poor" tended to be "the poor in spirit," so that the latter phrase might be fairly

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held to interpret the single word "poor" used by Jesus in a spirit thoroughly congenial to His mind. But the context in Luke makes it clear that the writer is using the word, in the literal sense, of those whose earthly resources are scanty; for he follows it up with the words, "Woe unto you that are rich," where "rich" can only mean the possessors of material, not of spiritual, wealth. Indeed the whole context, as well as other features of the Gospel, such as the Parable of Dives and Lazarus (xvi. 19-31) could not unfairly be interpreted as betraying a bias against the rich and in favour of the poor. This interpretation would be impossible in the case of Matthew's presentation of the message of Jesus, for in his version words are added which limit the meaning unambiguously to the sphere of the spirit, Luke's beatitude on those that "hunger now" (vi. 21) appearing in Matthew as reserved for those who "hunger and thirst *after righteousness*" (v. 6). It will hardly be maintained that it makes no difference whether Jesus be represented as the champion of the poor and the enemy of the rich, irrespective of their spiritual quality, or whether His blessings and His woes are pronounced on men purely on the basis of that quality. Here again, we are compelled to ask, Which version, Matthew's or Luke's, represents the mind of Jesus more adequately? Which is "verbally inspired"?

Even here, however, reconciliation may not be beyond the power of the determined harmonist. But what of the superscription on the

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Cross ? Of this each of the four Gospels has its own version. In Matthew it is, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (xxvii. 37); in Mark, "The King of the Jews" (xv. 26); in Luke, "This is the King of the Jews" (xxiii. 38); in John, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (xix. 19). Now the superscription, one would imagine, must have been a matter of familiar knowledge to hundreds of Jesus' contemporaries, and stood a fair chance of being accurately preserved by tradition, especially among those to whom the Cross was the crowning experience in the career of Jesus: yet there are four more or less divergent accounts of it. Doubtless they all agree on the main point, but which of them correctly represents the ultimate truth ?

If there could be disagreement with regard to a matter of such fascinating interest, it is unreasonable to expect agreement in matters of lesser moment. Discrepancies in the detail of parallel narratives which agree in the central fact will not seriously disconcert anyone who has learned to distinguish between essentials and unessentials. When New Testament writers quote from the Old Testament, they were far from always aiming at a meticulously accurate reproduction of its words. Indeed the Greek Version is quoted by them as Scripture, even where that Version not only differs from but entirely misrepresents the original Hebrew. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, e.g. (x. 5-7), in quoting Psalm xl. 6, 7, writes, following the Greek Version, "a body hast Thou prepared for

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me"—words which naturally played a great part in ancient discussions of the incarnation—in place of the very different words of the Hebrew original, "mine ears hast Thou opened." And James, in the epoch-making discussion in Acts xv of the question of the admission of the Gentiles to the Christian Church, quotes the Greek Version of Amos ix. 11 f. which puts upon the words a sense directly opposite to that of the original writer. The Hebrew words promise that the Jews shall "possess the remnant of Edom;" the Greek, followed by James, looks forward to the time when "the residue of men shall seek after the Lord." The Hebrew expresses a narrowly nationalistic hope, the Greek is inspired by a noble universalism, which admirably serves the purpose of James's argument, and could not be bettered as a "Scripture proof" that the Christian Church was divinely destined to embrace Gentiles as well as Jews. Here we are in the happy position of seeing exactly how the difference arose. It rests upon two simple misunderstandings of the Hebrew text by the Greek translators. The consonants אדם may stand either for *Edom* or *adam* (which means *man, humanity, men*); the Greeks, without vowels to guide them, mistakenly gave the consonants the latter meaning. And the original יִרְשׁוּ (*shall inherit*), was inadvertently misread as יִדְרְשׁוּ (*shall seek*).¹ Facts such as these ought surely

¹ After these mistakes had been made, the insertion of *the Lord* after the transitive vb. *seek* ("that the remnant of men may seek . . .") was natural and almost inevitable. In Amos, the Alexandrine Codex (A) has this addition, but not the Vatican (B).

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to convince the most doughty traditionalist that the furnishing of an infallible text was no part of the divine purpose: a mistranslation could be treated by an apostle, in utter good faith, as "scripture" and could be used in argument to do its beneficent work.

There are few things which some Christians would covet more than a knowledge of the exact words that fell from the lips of Jesus, and some have even learned Greek in the hope of thus winning the most intimate possible fellowship with His mind. But we do not have in the New Testament more than two or three specimens of the actual words of Jesus. *Abba, amen, corban, ephphatha, talitha cumi* and *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani*—that is about all. It is now quite certain that, though He probably knew Greek and not impossibly even Latin, the language which He habitually spoke was the Galilean dialect of Aramaic; and, except for one or two fragments like those just quoted, preserved perhaps because they were spoken on peculiarly memorable occasions or with a never-to-be-forgotten impressiveness, all the recorded words of Jesus have been transmitted to us in the form of a Greek translation. Modern scholars—most recently the late Professor Burney¹—have skillfully attempted to reconstruct some of the original Aramaic discourses of our Lord on the basis of the Greek Version in the Gospels; but the results, though always instructive and often probable, are necessarily only conjectural. It is

¹ In *The Poetry of our Lord*.

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impossible to recover with absolute certainty the actual words of Jesus. The reader of the Gospels in Greek, though doubtless he comes a little nearer those words, is no less certainly reading a translation of them than the reader of the English Version.

Further, in their record of His words, not only do the Gospels occasionally differ, as we have seen, from one another, but the manuscripts of the same Gospel may differ, even at points of considerable importance for our understanding of His mind. Let two illustrations suffice. In Mark ix. 29 we read in the Authorized Version, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." Now two very important manuscripts omit the words *and fasting*. This point, raising as it does the question of asceticism, can hardly be said to be immaterial. Certainly Jesus elsewhere recognizes the practice of fasting as a legitimate religious exercise (Matthew vi. 16) especially when it is a spontaneous, and not a systematized expression of the spirit: but does He do so here? Would He have co-ordinated fasting with prayer? And if He did so link them, why do two important manuscripts omit the fasting? Is this an accident, or is the fasting a later insertion, reflecting the more formalistic temper of a later age than Jesus? What did Jesus really say? Where manuscripts differ, who is to decide?

Another perplexing discrepancy occurs among the manuscript readings of Matthew x. 8, which forms part of Jesus' commission to His twelve

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disciples. The passage runs in the Authorized Version thus: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." A thoughtful person would be immediately struck by the phrase *raise the dead*. He would almost instinctively ask, Is it natural or probable that Jesus would commission His disciples to do, as part of their normal ministry, what He Himself is recorded to have done only twice or thrice, or that He would have co-ordinated so stupendous a miracle as the raising of the dead with the relatively simple task of healing the sick? Further, the fluctuating position of this clause in the MSS., as evidenced by the difference between A.V. and R.V., tends to confirm the suspicion of its originality. There is abundant and excellent manuscript evidence for the text as quoted; but it is of more than usual interest to note that in the eighth century manuscript known as L (Codex Regius), which, though late, is recognized as valuable, the words *raise the dead* are omitted. This of course may be an accident; but again it may represent the truth. Who is to say?

In this connection it will not be inappropriate to refer to the paradoxes of Jesus. He said, "Love your enemies" (Matt. v. 44); but He also said, or is reported to have said, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). This is indeed a hard saying, so hard that it cannot have been an invention, it must be Jesus' own; but it would

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be a crime to take it with prosaic literalness. The Master who charged His disciples to love their enemies, can hardly have expected them to hate their friends, least of all those of their own household. A paradox like this—and there are many such in Scripture—has the value of stimulating thought: it shows the futility of a mere appeal to the letter; it imposes upon us the obligation of piercing beyond individual and contradictory words to the mind in which the seeming contradiction is resolved.

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The argument of this chapter may seem to our conservative friends “destructive,” to use a favourite word of theirs: but it rests upon facts, and facts are destructive of nothing but fallacies: they can only make in the end for truth. Had it been any part of the divine intention to furnish us with an infallible book, some other medium than Hebrew would surely have been selected; for the Hebrew alphabet, which has only consonants but no vowels, is as unsuitable a vehicle as could well be imagined for the entirely unambiguous expression of thought. Further, the divergent accounts of the same incident and the divergent manuscript readings of the same text all point us away from the letter to the spirit. We cannot recapture even the actual words of Jesus, we possess them only in a Greek translation. The impossibility of attaining absolute certainty upon these matters has a profound religious value, for it renders indefensible the

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worship of the letter. It prepares the way for the religion of the spirit which Jeremiah foresaw when he said, "After those days I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their heart" (xxxii. 33). It delivers us from the yoke of bondage to the letter and ushers us into that freedom for which Christ set us free (Gal. v. 1). For in this as in every sphere, where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

THE MORAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE moral difficulties of the Old Testament are neither few nor trivial. From time immemorial they have been a stumbling-block to the devout and the delight of the scornful—weapons of offence which, in skilful and malicious hands, have brought confusion to a simple faith—and the lovers of the Bible have too often been tempted to repel such assaults upon it in ways little calculated to produce conviction in the mind of the adversary.

The difficulties would occasion no surprise in any other book than the Bible, nor would they surprise us there, if we did not approach the book with certain presuppositions. Acts of questionable morality are common enough in every stage of civilization; but when such acts are perpetrated not only by the ordinary members, but by the chosen representatives of the “chosen” people—chosen to interpret to the world the will and character of God—and when those acts are described without censure in the book which Dean Burgon asks us to believe is in every syllable and letter “the direct utterance of the Most High,” the unsophisticated conscience may well be perplexed. These difficulties

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gather most thickly about the earlier books of the Bible, but they are not confined to these, they are to be found in some of the latest and the noblest.

We have no right to approach the Bible with the presupposition that its morality must be irreproachable ; our duty is to look at the facts with honest and dispassionate minds, and only then to frame what theory or explanation of them we can. Now let us look at some of the more outstanding facts. The moral difficulties of the Old Testament are constituted chiefly by the deception, the cruelty, the sexual licence, and the hatred, exhibited by certain of Israel's representative men, as, in earlier times, by patriarchs, and in later by judges, kings and even prophets.

As illustrations of deception may be mentioned the three tales in which a patriarch denies his wife—Abraham twice (Gen. xii. 10-20, xx) and Isaac once (xxvi. 6-16). Whether these three are but variant versions of one incident is immaterial to the argument. In each case the lie which the patriarch tells to ensure his own safety is one by which his wife's honour is gravely imperilled, and Abraham is in both tales laden with presents by the king whom he has deceived. Jacob is portrayed as a veritable master of deception. He begins his career by securing a despicable advantage over his brother through an act of unspeakable treachery to his blind and aged father; and in the far land to which he was driven by his fear of the brother whom he had defrauded, he enriches himself by sharp practices at the

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expense of the man who had befriended him. True sons of his, the Israelites later are represented as relieving the Egyptians, by a ruse, of much valuable property (Exod. iii. 22; xii. 36). Even if tales like these were proved to be not, in the strictest sense, historical, and if the stories of Jacob and Esau really reflect the relations of two hostile peoples rather than the experiences of two individual men, it would still be true that these tales of deception, in their present form, seem to excite no indignation in the minds of those who told them, and Gunkel may even be right in supposing that the original tales may have been greeted with roars of laughter: the shepherds who told and listened to them round a camp fire would be delighted with the exploits of their wily ancestor who could so cunningly increase his flock. Here was a shepherd indeed. But of all the recorded acts of treachery the basest is that of Jael, as it was a cruel violation of the gracious law which enjoined hospitality to the guest who had sought the shelter of a tent. There are two accounts of the incident—the better-known prose version in Judges iv which represents Jael as stealing softly to Sisera and smiting the tent-pin into his temples, as he lay “fast asleep and weary,” and there is the older poetic version in chap. v, according to which she dealt him a terrific blow as his head was buried in the dish of milk which she had brought him. It is fortunate for the honour of Jael that the poetic version is the more probable: treacherous as she is in both versions to her guest, her treachery is

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redeemed, if treachery ever can be, by her heroism. Nor must it be forgotten that the guest whom she felled by her blow was the deadly enemy of her country. But not the least startling feature of the poem is that in it she is celebrated by another woman—and she, too, a prophetess and judge, to whom the children of Israel were in the habit of coming up for judgment—as “blessed above women in the tent.” It is an eloquent testimony to the crude, if very intelligible, morality of those early times.

Not less striking is the occasional cruelty which meets us. It is with sorrow that we read of the readiness with which Abraham connived at Sarah's harsh treatment of Hagar when she discovered that her maid was about to bear a child (Gen. xvi. 4-6), and it is a pleasure to note that, in the parallel and later version of the story, which displays a maturer moral sense, the patriarch makes careful provision for Hagar's need, before she is finally dismissed to wander in the wilderness (xxi. 14). The earliest Hebrew code of legislation, known as the Book of the Covenant, contemplates the possibility of a slave being beaten to death by his master, and no penalty is to be exacted from the master if the injured man lives for a day or two, “for he is his money” (Exod. xxi. 20 f.). The Zulu who knew the lot of the black man in the power of the white, was quick, as Bishop Colenso reminded his generation, to detect the injustice of such a law. The slavery whose legitimacy is implicitly acknowledged by this law, is not directly challenged even by the

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New Testament, though doubtless a clear understanding of the implications of the teaching of Jesus was bound in time to lead to its abolition. Miss Maude Royden¹ tells of an American friend who described to her how, as a child, he had been taken to the station at Boston to witness the departure of a runaway slave who was being returned to his owner in the south. A crowd had assembled at the station to see him depart. A sermon was preached on the station platform in which the preacher, basing his argument on the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, showed with convincing clearness that slavery had always been recognized by the Christian Church, and the right of a master to recover a runaway slave had been recognized by so great an authority as the apostle Paul.

The unchallenged persistence of the practice of slavery illustrates the pernicious influence which a false reverence towards a sacred Book can continue to produce for centuries. Another illustration is furnished by another law in the same code of legislation already alluded to—the law that “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exod. xxii. 18). It is by no means a matter of unmixed regret that Hebrew religion was rudely intolerant of heathenish practices and ideas which could only have promoted its degradation: but the inconsiderate application of this law till within relatively modern times by too zealous defenders of the faith who were themselves obsessed by superstition, has had

¹ *The Church and Woman*, p. 187.

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the most cruel and sinister consequences, and has consigned many an innocent old woman to death for a purely imaginary crime. Even the early prophets cannot be exonerated from the charge of violent acts. Samuel is said to have hewed Agag, the king of the Amalekites, in pieces "before Jehovah," that is, as a religious act, because Saul had wrongfully spared him in the sacred war of extermination which Samuel, in the name of Jehovah, had commissioned him to wage against the hated Amalekites; and Saul himself, for his failure to comply to the letter with an order which to-day would be regarded as inhuman, was solemnly "rejected" by the official head of the theocratic state (1 Sam. xv), and moved through the years to his melancholy doom shadowed and crippled by that curse.

Elijah, that titanic champion of the Jehovah religion, took summary vengeance on the Baal prophets who opposed him, having them seized and slaughtered (1 Kings xviii. 40), just as later king Jehu put the Baal worshippers to the sword, after having cunningly enticed them into a Baal temple by a lying pretence (2 Kings x. 18-28). Elijah is also said to have on two occasions called down fire from heaven upon a company of fifty soldiers sent by the king to apprehend him (2 Kings i). Whether these hundred men lost their lives or not—and there is reason to believe that this is not an integral part of the Elijah cycle of narratives—the story is at any rate eloquent of the fierce spirit which thought it right and proper for a prophet to dispose of his

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enemies in this summary fashion. This spirit lived on through the centuries; and it is a comfort to remember that when it broke out among the disciples who wished to show their zeal against the enemies of their Master by emulating the example of the great Elijah, He rebuked them sharply and promptly and reminded them that the Son of man came to save men's lives, not to destroy them (Luke ix. 51-56).¹

A tale illustrating a similar ferocity of temper is told of Elijah's successor. When a crowd of children followed Elisha on his way to Bethel with the mocking words, "Go up, thou bald head," the prophet turned and cursed them solemnly in the name of Jehovah; and the effect of the curse, we are given to understand, was that forty-two bears came out of the wood and tore forty-two of the children (2 Kings ii. 23-25). What may seem the almost criminal petulance of this act may be to some small extent explained, though hardly condoned, if we translate with Sellin, "Go up and shear thy locks," and assume that Elisha was a nazirite: the children would in that case be insulting the symbol of Elisha's consecration. But, at any rate to a modern taste, the penalty seems excessive for the crime; and as a writer in the *Christian World* for 14th June, 1923, remarked, in describing an annual meeting of the Bible League, "It says much for the warping effect of traditionalism that one of the

¹ Even if these words (*vv.* 55*b*, 56*a*) which are absent from most of the great MSS., are a gloss, undoubtedly they correctly represent our Lord's attitude. *He rebuked them*: that is enough for the argument.

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loudest bursts of applause of the whole day followed the remark of a speaker who stoutly declared that it was in accord with the character of God that the bears should have mauled—even he seemed to hesitate at the use of the word ‘tear’ or ‘devour’—the little children who mocked Elisha.”

A moment ago we referred to Samuel’s slaughter of Agag and his “rejection” of Saul. In favour of Samuel it may be urged that Saul had violated the “ban” which was one of the fundamental laws of Israel’s life and had its analogue among other Semitic peoples. It was natural for Samuel, as the guardian of Israel’s religious institutions, to enforce the ban and to penalize with the utmost severity any violation of it. The clearest expression of the law of the ban is found in Leviticus xxvii. 28 f. A thing is said to be “devoted” or put under the “ban” when it is withdrawn from common use. In practice this means that property thus devoted passes irrevocably from its owner to God—that is, to His sanctuary, treasury, or priests (cf. Josh. vi. 19): while in the case of persons, such as the inhabitants of Jericho and the Canaanite population generally, they are “devoted” to destruction. In accordance with this law, Samuel commissions Saul to “smite Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have; slay without pity man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (1 Sam. xv. 3). That was the ban in operation. It is not pleasant to be reminded that the religion which was the precursor of Christianity demanded

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in its earlier stages the ruthless massacre, on occasion, of hundreds of innocent women, children and cattle; and there are some who believe that Saul's disobedience may have been partly inspired by a perception of the inhumanity or the senselessness of such a procedure, and that he may be fairly regarded as the forerunner of a more humane religion. This is probably too generous and too modern an interpretation of Saul's conduct. But at any rate it is alike futile and unworthy to attempt to defend a law demanding the indiscriminate extermination of the enemy alien as "the direct utterance of the Most High," if by the Most High we are to understand the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To those who offer such a defence one might be tempted to reply, "Your God is my devil." It is not surprising that the history, especially the earlier history, of a people who won their land by fighting and whose temper was moulded by legislation so fierce, should be stained by deeds of violence and blood. The revolution which set Israel and Judah upon two separate ways was directly due to Solomon's oppression of his subjects for the purpose of securing labour and money to advance his costly building enterprises and to maintain his luxurious court (1 Kings xi. 26-xii. 20); and this same Solomon, in the fashion of Oriental monarchs, had inaugurated his reign by contriving the assassination of a possible rival (1 Kings ii. 25), and of such others as might be likely to give trouble (ii. 26-46). This tale of assassinations is crowned by the simple words,

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“ So the kingdom was established in the land of Solomon ” (ii. 46); or in other words, the steps of his throne were bathed in blood.

The record of early Israel is marred by more than one unedifying tale of sexual licence, exhibited not only by common people (cf. Jud. xix) and by courtiers (2 Sam. xiii) but by others who held the highest place in the affectionate esteem of later ages. Solomon, to whom they looked back as the incarnation of wisdom, is said to have had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings xi. 3). Even if this be an exaggeration, as one might be pardoned for hoping, it certainly points in the direction of a reprehensible indulgence. In this Solomon was but following in the footsteps of his father who had had several wives and concubines (2 Sam. v. 13). All this is in disagreeable contrast to the simplicity of the immediately preceding period, Saul having had, so far as we know, only one wife and one concubine. A large harem was a symbol of royal magnificence, it was one of the many undesirable things which came in with the monarchy and which showed how far Israel was travelling from the ideals and usages of the more democratic days of the judges. But the fatal blot upon David's reputation was his guilty association with Bathsheba and the cold-blooded stratagem with which he compassed the death of her husband to conceal his own guilt (2 Sam. xi f.). We cannot now claim the fifty-first psalm as a proof of his penitence, for it is impossible to believe that the words,

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“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done the thing that is evil in Thy sight,” could have been penned by a man who had done the deadliest of wrongs to two human beings, having robbed a man of his life and a woman of her honour. But the moving tale, as told by the historian, is sufficient proof of the reality and depth of his penitence. And it is just here that the superior ethical worth of Israel’s religion manifests itself. What other king in the ancient Oriental world would have bowed in humility and contrition under the admonition of a prophet? The licence accorded to a monarch of those days is luridly clear in the bold words of the Phœnician Jezebel to her Hebrew husband, which imply that a king worthy of the name will do what he likes and take what he pleases (1 Kings xxi. 7). But Israel has a conscience, and her guilty king respects it and bows to it, when he meets it incarnate in the person of Nathan.

It would add nothing to the point of the discussion to cite the story of Lot and his daughters (Gen. xix. 30-38) as that story is no doubt to be interpreted ethnologically and is intended to cast opprobrium on the origin of Moab and Ammon, the hereditary enemies of Israel. Nor would any one who understands the gradual growth of moral ideals be perplexed by the two wives of Jacob in patriarchal times or of Elkanah in a later but still early age (1 Sam. i. 2). It is more to the point to notice the drift in the direction of a monogamous ideal, which already prevailed in the time of the great prophets, if not before.

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Isaiah had but one wife (viii. 3), Hosea's love for his wife was for him an adumbration of the love of Jehovah for Israel (i-iii), and in a touching phrase Ezekiel speaks of the wife whom he is about to lose as "the desire of his eyes" (xxiv. 16).

The last difficulty we shall mention is the occasionally vindictive attitude of the Old Testament to enemies. The most notorious illustration of this is of course to be found in the cursing psalms. Many of the imprecations are indeed very terrible—the climax being reached perhaps by that psalmist who counts it a glad day for the righteous when his eyes shall see vengeance and he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked (Ps. lviii. 10). The strange thing too, is that sometimes this wild longing for vengeance flashes out from the tenderest hearts (cf. Ps. xli. 10; cxl. 9-11; cxliii. 12). It was the gentle souls that, by the waters of Babylon had wept at the thought of Zion, who cursed their oppressors in these fearful words:

"Happy be he who shall recompense thee
For all thou hast done unto us.
Happy be he who shall seize and shatter
Thy children against the rocks."

(Ps. cxxxvii. 7-9).

The psalms, however, do not stand alone. There are few words more terrible than those recorded in Jer. xlviii. 10, whether they be Jeremiah's or not: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of Jehovah negligently, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood;" and more

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than one prophet has exhausted the resources of his imagination (cf. Ezek. xxxv) in enumerating the calamities which he prays may descend upon hostile peoples, notably upon Edom, between whom and Judah there was an implacable feud rooted in ancient days (Gen. xxvii) and as venomous as ever in the days of Malachi, who represents Jehovah as saying, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (i. 2 f.), that hatred being proved by the devastation of Edom. The most passionate expression of Judah's hatred of Edom is that in Isaiah xxxiv, which looks forward with fierce joy to the day when the land shall not only become a howling desolation, but a blazing hell.

" Her streams shall be turned into pitch,
And the dust of the land into brimstone ;
Her land shall be turned into pitch,
That burneth night and day.
It shall not be quenched for ever.
Her smoke shall go up through the ages ;
A waste she shall lie evermore,
To be crossed by no traveller for ever."
(Ver. 9 f.)¹

This exhibition of the vindictive temper is all the more sad that it comes in all probability from the same hand as gave us the beautiful picture which follows of the happy days when the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose, and sorrow and sighing would flee away (chap. xxxv). Malachi comforts the faithful whose patience has been sorely tried with the

¹ From my *Isaiah in Modern Speech*.

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promise that when the sun of righteousness shall arise, "ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (iv. 3). These very human tempers reveal the good men of those ancient days as men of like passions with ourselves, but they can hardly be said to contribute to our edification.

We have been discussing the moral behaviour and ideals of some of Israel's representative men, but no less perplexing is the occasional behaviour attributed to Israel's God. It is from Him that the command is represented as issuing for the indiscriminate slaughter of Amalek's women, infants and sucklings (I Sam. xv. 2 f.). It was in accordance with the law promulgated in His name and believed to bear the stamp of His approval that His people devoted to destruction all that were in the captured city of Jericho, man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and ass, with the edge of the sword (Josh. vi. 21). It is said of Him that He sought to kill Moses in an inn for no reason that is assigned—we are left from the context to conjecture why (Exod. iv. 24-26), and it is He who is said, in His anger, to have smitten Uzzah with death, whose only crime was that he put forth his hand to steady the ark (2 Sam. vi. 6 f.). Doubtless all this curious conduct can be satisfactorily explained by the student of ancient religion: it is connected with primitive conceptions of God, with the aetiology of circumcision, with the idea of taboo, and the like. But it leaves upon the mind of the reader who is ignorant of the true explanation the

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impression that the God of Israel could be cruel and capricious, and Meltzer¹ has well portrayed such a reader's helpless astonishment as he asks, "Is this our God, who issues the order to spare no captive, and who rejects the man who reserved the best of the cattle to be sacrificed in His honour? Is this indeed a man of God who turns coldly away from the penitent sinner and hews a defenceless prisoner in pieces?" (1 Sam. xv). One can understand the child, who, when his mother had read to him first from the Old Testament and then from the New, remarked in his naïve and childish way, "How God has improved!" This artless remark contains a real glimpse of the truth. God has not changed, He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, ever just and ever merciful, but men's apprehension of Him changes. The rough warriors of the thirteenth or fifteenth century B.C. did not and could not know Him as we have come to know Him in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE MORAL EXCELLENCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

VASTLY too much has been made of the moral difficulties² of the Old Testament. In that comprehensive literature they are only sporadic and incidental and chiefly occur in the earlier stages.

¹ *Das Alte Testament im christlichen Religionsunterrichte*, p. 96.

² "As well judge a sculptor by a fragment of broken stone in his studio." (B. Snell, *Gain or Loss?* p. 146).

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It is nothing short of a folly and a crime to ignore the pervasive moral sublimity of the Old Testament. At its highest, where in all antiquity is there anything to equal it? The unrelenting demand of the prophets, those incomparable interpreters of the will of Jehovah, is that men should do justly and love mercy (Mic. vi. 8). No programme for the regulation of men's behaviour to one another could be more simple, none could be more penetrating. Never have the interests of the poor and, in general, of the exploited members of society been more jealously safeguarded than by Hebrew legislators or more stubbornly defended than by Hebrew prophets. The law prescribes that the manservant and the maidservant and the cattle shall have their opportunity of rest as well as the master (Deut. v. 14). It rebukes the grudging spirit and urges generosity of heart as well as of hand. What could be finer than this: "If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Thou shalt surely give him and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him" (Deut. xv. 7-10). What could be more humane than the regulation that the wages of a hired servant should be paid before sunset of the day on which they were due, "for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it"?

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(Deut. xxiv. 15). How many a modern dress-maker would rejoice if this ancient regulation could be enacted and enforced, and how many a harassed shop-keeper, if his money were paid when it was due ! And what could be more delicate than this : " When thou dost lend thy neighbour any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand outside and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge to thee " ? (Deut. xxiv, 10 f.). Here is an almost startling consideration for the honour of the poor man which implies the finest regard for the rights of personality. And there are many such regulations in the Hebrew legal codes.

The prophets are even more emphatic champions of the rights of the down-trodden. They visit with measureless condemnation those, be they men or women, who " oppress the poor and crush the needy " (Amos iv. 1), and they do not scruple to compare them to cannibals, who " eat the flesh of my people and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones and chop them in pieces as for the pot and as flesh within the caldron " (Mic. iii. 3). No modern reformer ever denounced more passionately the exploitation of the common people. Over against the occasional cruelties in warfare recorded by the historians—and can warfare in any age be other than cruel ?—must in fairness be set the passionate attack which prophet after prophet hurls at the cruelties of civilization, and their words are as fresh, as challenging, and as necessary

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to-day as the day they were uttered. We are far enough yet, even in the twentieth century, from the moral standards set by the prophets for civilized society.

Nor are the prophets alone: the psalmists and the writer of the Book of Job present ideals of personal integrity which are a rebuke and a challenge to many who think that the day of the Old Testament is over. The good man of the psalmists is one who "hath clean hands and a pure heart" (xxiv. 4), who "walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart, who slandereth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his friend, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (Ps. xv. 2 f.). But the most wonderful portraiture of a good man is furnished by Job's immortal defence of his character against the aspersions of his friends (xxix-xxxi). He claims to have used the power which his high position gave him for the protection of the helpless and the defeat of those who crushed them.

"For I rescued the poor when he cried,
The fatherless and the helpless.
The wretched gave me their blessing,
The widow's heart I made sing.
Eyes was I to the blind,
Feet to the lame was I;
A father was I to the poor,
And I searched out the cause of the stranger.
I shattered the jaws of the wicked,
And hurled the prey from his teeth."
(xxix. 12-17)¹

¹ The translation is taken from my *The Wisdom Books in Modern Speech*.

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There is nothing more sublime in literature than the closing chapter of this great speech (xxx).¹

“ Never spurned I the cause of my servant—
Of man or of maid—when we strove.
Did not He that made me make him ?
Did not One fashion us in the womb ?
Ne’er denied I the wish of the poor,
Nor brought grief to the eyes of the widow ;
Never ate I my morsel alone,
Without sharing thereof with the orphan ;
Never saw I one naked and perishing—
Needy, with nothing to cover him—
But I warmed him with fleece from my lambs,
And his loins gave me their blessing.
Never set I my trust upon gold,
Nor called the fine gold my confidence.
Mine abundant wealth never elated me,
Nor all that my hands had gotten.
Ne’er rejoiced I at enemy’s fall,
Nor triumphed when evil befel him.
Nor suffered my mouth to sin
By demanding his life in a curse.
The men of my tent will declare
None has ever been stinted of food.
Not a stranger e’er lodged in the street,
For I opened my door to the wayfarer.”
(xxx. 13 ff.)¹

Here is one whose heart was as pure as his outer life was stainless, one who assuredly wrote no cursing psalm, one whom no threatening crowd could intimidate, one who in the humble consciousness of stewardship used his wealth to scatter blessings abroad, one who sheltered the

¹ The translation is taken from my *The Wisdom Books in Modern Speech*.

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stranger that came to his door and ate not his morsel alone, one who respected the rights of his man-servant and maid-servant and who based this respect upon his common human kinship and brotherhood with them, one who took the Fatherhood of God seriously and wrought out its implications in his daily relations with them, for "did not He that made me in the womb make him? and did not One fashion us in the womb?" Where in all the world is there anything like this? The sentence just quoted is far beyond the vision of a Plato or an Aristotle, to whom some men were destined to be but the tools or instruments of others. Verily a literature that can furnish an ideal like this can hold up its head proudly among the literatures of the world.

Thus it is the Old Testament itself that furnishes us with the means of criticizing and correcting its occasional moral inadequacies. Sometimes this criticism is deliberate, sometimes it is implicit, but it is none the less real to those who can read between the lines. The critic who believes that the stories of Hagar's flight in Genesis xvi and xxi are from two different documents, sees in the sorrow and clemency of Abraham to Hagar in the latter story a criticism of, as it is an advance upon, the former story, in which he makes no provision for her comfort. But if the conservative rejects this explanation, there is other less challengeable material. The revolution of Jehu, with its appalling massacre of members of the royal houses of both Israel

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and Judah and its treacherous slaughter of the Baal worshippers (2 Kings x), clearly commended itself to the conscience of the time. It had been largely instigated by Elisha (2 Kings ix. 1), and according to 2 Kings x. 30, it received express divine approval. "Jehovah said to Jehu"—we are not told how the communication came—"Thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart." A hundred years after this, however, Hosea regards Jehu's conduct as a monstrous crime which must be punished by the destruction of the northern kingdom (Hos. i. 4). This is criticism none the less real that it is not formal.

Or take the ancient practice of involving children in the doom of their fathers, a practice which was natural so long as the political and religious unit was not the individual but the family and the rights of personality were not yet understood. When Achan is convicted of appropriating part of the spoil of Jericho, not only does he suffer the extreme penalty but his sons and daughters as well (Josh. vii. 24 f.). This in the days of Joshua. In the early monarchy two sons and five grandsons of Saul are solemnly hanged "before Jehovah" (2 Sam. xxi. 6, 9), i.e., as a religious act, in expiation of an offence committed years before by Saul, who is now dead; the guilty man can be punished in the person of his descendants. About two hundred years afterwards we find this custom departed from, and the departure is significant enough to

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call for special comment. Joash King of Judah had been assassinated in a conspiracy by his servants (2 Kings xii. 20), and his son Amaziah, when he was firmly established as his successor, took care to punish the assassins, but—it is expressly added—"the children of the murderers he did not put to death" (2 Kings xiv. 6). The old practice, however, or at any rate the old theory, lived on. Nearly four hundred years later still, Esther the Jewess, not content with the hanging of Haman (Esth. vii. 10), is represented as requesting that his ten sons be also hanged (ix. 13); and in the Book of Daniel not only the noblemen who had informed against Daniel but their wives and children are consigned to the lions' den (Dan. vi. 24). If it be said that this was done at the command of the Persian king, and proves nothing for the attitude of later Judaism, it will be enough to remember that according to John ix. 2, even our Lord's disciples could ask Him, "Master, who did sin, this man *or his parents*, that he should be born blind?" But long before, Job's robust moral sense had already challenged the justice of this principle: he repudiates the argument that, though the sinner seemed to escape, God stored up the penalty for his children, and demands that retribution should fall upon the man himself, and that *he* should feel it (Job xxi. 19). Earlier still the law had been laid down that "the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, *nor the children for the fathers*, every man shall be put to death for his own sin"

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(Deut. xxiv. 16). The italicized words are a direct and deliberate criticism of a long-standing practice which was believed to have the divine approval.

Over against the startling benediction which the writer of Psalm cxxxvii pronounces upon the man who will dash the children of his enemies against the rocks has to be set the pity which the noble writer of the Book of Jonah sees to fill the heart of God for the little folk of hated Nineveh, who did not know their right hand from their left; and this same writer finds the very cattle of Nineveh comprehended under the all-embracing love of God (Jonah iv. 11). What a contrast to the fierce demand of an older time that the oxen and the sheep, the camels and the asses of Amalek must be slain (1 Sam. xv. 3). Here is criticism indeed, none the less effective because it so gently and silently supersedes the crudities of ancient practice or contemporary theory and existing moral tempers.

The quotations in the last paragraph illustrate the conflicting attitudes exhibited by the Old Testament towards the foreigner. Sometimes that attitude is narrow, nationalistic, hostile, aggressive to the point of fanaticism; sometimes it is tolerant, friendly, generous, brotherly. Those who point with scorn at the pitiless laws which governed ancient Hebrew warfare, or at Esther's demand for a supplementary butchery of the adversaries of her countrymen (Esth. ix. 13), or at such visions as one may occasionally find in later prophecy, as that of the warrior coming

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back from his conquest of Edom with garments bespattered with the blood of his enemies (Isaiah lxiii. 1-6), ought in fairness to remember that it is this same Old Testament which has furnished us with visions and ideals of human brotherhood, far transcending anything that has ever yet been realized in historical experience. What could surpass in generosity of outlook the words of the prophet who wrote at a time when his people were suffering the sorrows of exile, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all* ye ends of the earth" (Isaiah xlv. 22); or of the writer of the Book of Jonah who invites his countrymen to believe in a divine love which extends beyond them to repentant Nineveh, which for two centuries had ground Israel and Judah under her iron heel; or that most wonderful vision of all—an anticipation by twenty-five hundred years of our modern League of Nations—in which Israel, Egypt and Assyria, nations which in ancient or more recent days had hated and feared and fought each other, are seen joined together in bonds of common friendship resting on a common worship (Isaiah xix. 23-25)? Here is a Triple Alliance indeed, an alliance of erstwhile enemies, a miniature of that friendly world which will come into being when nations will have the sense and the grace to submit their disputes to arbitration, and, content with the decision, will learn the art of war no more (Isaiah ii. 2-4).

We have already alluded to the blemishes upon the reputation of some of Israel's leading men. But what is too often forgotten is the

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inexorable fidelity with which the Old Testament portrays the nemesis that attends upon *their* sin as upon all sin. It believes passionately in the moral constitution of the world; its motto is, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. xxxii. 23). Israel's elect men are treated on the same principle as the elect nation, a principle defined by Amos in words which must have been as incredible as they were unwelcome to his shallow contemporaries: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, *therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*" (iii. 2). From this inexorable law neither patriarch nor monarch is exempt. Jacob was a master of duplicity, but the story of his life shows that it cost him dear. Not only was he punished again and again in kind—deceived by Laban in the matter of his marriage (Gen. xxix. 25), deceived by his sons in regard to the fate of his beloved Joseph and plunged into a life-long sorrow (Gen. xxxvii. 33-35)—but his deception compelled him to flee to another land from the land of his birth and from the mother who had loved him and schemed for him, and we never read that he saw her face again. So, too, David's double crime was fearfully punished. The passion which cost him his honour was repeated in his children, and over the whole story of his subsequent career—of Amnon's murder contrived by Absalom to avenge the honour of his sister (2 Sam. xiii. 29), and of Absalom's rebellion which nearly cost David his throne—the word Nemesis is writ large. And Solomon's idolatries

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which irritated his people and stung them into rebellion in the reign of his son and successor are directly traced by the historian to his many marriages with foreign princesses (1 Kings xi. 8 f). Again, the earlier historians, who never point the moral but let the story itself reveal it, implicitly censure the bigamous practices of early days, in their tales of Abraham, of Jacob and of Elkanah, by disclosing the jealousies which inevitably disrupted households in which there were two wives and two groups of children. Thus here again there is more criticism in the Old Testament than appears on the surface. The Creation story itself with its Adam and Eve (Gen. ii. 18 ff.) and the Song of Songs, with its "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it" (viii. 7), each in its own way is an eloquent tribute to the ideal of monogamy.

The so-called cursing psalms have caused a perplexity out of all proportion to their intrinsic importance or number. They should occasion no surprise to anyone who remembers the feelings which were entertained towards the national enemy by many professedly Christian people during the Great War. If hymns and sentiments of hate are possible to good but exasperated men, nineteen centuries after the coming of Christ, their appearance is little to be wondered at five centuries before Him. But apart from this, it has to be remembered that those psalms are not the expression of personal spite, they are directed against the enemies of the moral order, such, e.g., as those who "slay the widow and the

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stranger and murder the fatherless " (Ps. xciv. 6). To men who have not yet learned to believe in immortality, they are the almost inevitable expression of their faith in the moral order, which must be vindicated in this world, if it is to be vindicated at all. But perhaps the most remarkable thing about these psalms is that they are so few, only half a dozen or so¹ in a hundred and fifty. When one thinks of the harassed history of Israel during the thousand years or so represented by the Old Testament, a period of frequent wars, invasions and oppressions, during far the greater part of which those liberty-loving people were the thralls of one mighty foreign empire or another, the wonder rather is that the prayers for vengeance are so few. And, to the everlasting honour of the Hebrew people, from the greatest sufferers of all no such prayer is heard—not, for example, from the persecuted singer of the twenty-second psalm, whose words Jesus characteristically took upon His lips in the hour of His agony, nor from the great Sufferer of Isaiah liii, who, when bruised for the iniquities of others and led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet opened not his mouth. A point, too, that is usually overlooked is that much the most elaborate curses of all are called down upon Israel herself in the event of her disobedience to the known will of God (Deut. xxvii. 15-26; Lev. xxvi. 14-39). Here, as everywhere, the thinkers of Israel attest that their supreme and passionate concern is for

¹ Pss. lviii, lix, lxix, lxxxiii, cix, cxxxvii. In Ps. xciv. 1 Jehovah is appealed to as the "God of vengeance."

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the moral order of the world and the moral behaviour of men.

Opponents of the Bible who make merry over laws, issued in the name of Jehovah, demanding the extermination of the enemy, have to be reminded that morality, like everything else in this world, has a history. In such laws and practices Israel was but standing on the common Semitic level, from which, as we have seen, she was lifted to nobler heights by the genius of later men who had a truer appreciation of the mind of God. On the Moabite stone Chemosh imposes the same demand upon his people as Jehovah when they go to war with the enemy. So unpromising a start only adds to the wonder of later Hebrew religion, as we meet it in the prophets, and compels us to the conviction that within it some influence must have been at work which produced such results precisely there and nowhere else. But these results were reached by an inevitably slow process, and it is idle and foolish to demand the highest moral excellence at the earliest stages of the process. When I was a child, said Paul, I thought as a child: when Israel was a child she, too, thought as a child and grew with the progress of the ages in her apprehension of the will of God. It is a long step from Jephthah to Jeremiah, and another long step from Jeremiah to Jesus. The law of retaliation, which had the sanction of three venerable codes (Exod. xxi. 24; Deut. xix. 21; Lev. xxiv. 20) Jesus deliberately abrogated. "The spirit of Jehovah came upon Samson, and he went down to Ash-

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kelon and smote thirty men" (Jud. xiv. 19); "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22 f.): this contrast is the measure of the distance travelled by the Hebrew people in the course of their moral and religious development.

It is a very false perspective which emphasizes the moral difficulties of the Old Testament and ignores its sustained moral sublimity. We dare not in justice forget the unselfish generosity of Abraham, who, to prevent occasion of strife, was willing to surrender an old man's prior claim in favour of his younger nephew (Gen. xiii. 9); or the purity of Joseph in an hour of fierce temptation (xxxix), or his magnanimity in freely forgiving the brothers who had so deeply wronged him (l. 21); or the sublime self-sacrifice of Moses, who was willing to be blotted out, if thus he could save his erring people (Exod. xxxii. 32); or the heroism of Gideon, who, with a handful of men, faced the teeming ranks of his foes (Jud. vii); or the nobility of David, who refused to drink of the water of his beloved well, because it had been brought to him by his warriors at the risk of their lives (2 Sam. xxiii. 13-17); or the justice and courage of Nehemiah (v) who prevented the nobles, in a time of national distress, from exploiting the people; or the patriotic heroism of Esther (iv. 16) who, though it might cost her her life, resolved to enter the dread presence of the king, clinching her resolve with the immortal words, "And if I perish, I perish."

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A literature which contains scenes and personalities like these needs no apology. It is no part of an honest man's business to minimize such moral delinquencies as may exist in the Old Testament. Job's warning to his friends not to "speak deceitfully" for God (xiii. 7), is a reminder of the sheer wickedness of any attempt to conceal, disguise, or palliate the facts. But let us have all the facts.

THE NEGLECT OF THE BIBLE

FEW things are more astonishing than the modern neglect of the Bible. Whether we consider its intrinsic interest as the remarkable record of a remarkable people, its decisive influence upon the course of history and not least in the creation of modern civilization, the passionate devotion with which it was cherished by multitudes till comparatively recent times, or the readiness with which men have in many ages gone to death rather than surrender their right to read it, the prevalent neglect of it is as astonishing as it is deplorable. And the neglect is universal. Scholars of every land could echo the lament of Ricciotti who, in publishing his *Biblical Anthology*, remarks that he is under no illusion as to the little interest taken by the Italian public in the Bible, and sorrowfully admits that a frivolous novel wins an immensely wider response than a work great and vast as the world.

One does not perhaps often encounter ignorance so abysmal as that of the man who is said to have thanked a preacher for a sermon which had dispelled a misapprehension under which he had all his life been labouring, viz., that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife; or that of the Sunday School teacher who explained to his class that in one pocket of the little coat which

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Samuel's mother made him was a copy of the New Testament, and in the other a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress* ! But there are undoubtedly multitudes who think of Jeremiah not as a man who lived and suffered but simply as the name of a book in the Bible. In his volume on *The Prophets* Duhm truly remarks that educated men ought to know what they owe to the Hebrews as well as to the Greeks and Romans, and more particularly he reminds them that Hosea as a poet is to be reckoned among the greatest and should be familiar to them as one of the best in the literature of the world. "What a penetrating critic, this Hosea," he goes on to say, "yet most of our educated men hardly even know his name." What does the average man of to-day know of the Old Testament ? Perhaps a few of the shorter psalms, like the twenty-third; a few, a very few snatches of prophecy—occasionally, but seldom, a whole chapter, such as Isaiah liii and possibly xxxv, more often isolated verses, torn from their context: of Genesis he may know roughly, and very likely misunderstand, the story of the Fall, and he may have some faint idea of the careers of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph; of David he may know little more than the story of his conflict with Goliath and of his sin with Bathsheba. And that is about all. "Nehemiah," for all its vivid human interest and its fascinating account of a most critical period, told mostly in the words of the chief actor who was as much a man of heroic initiative and enterprise as he was a man of prayer, is to the average

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man a sealed book, while of the general march of Hebrew history from the exodus to the exile and beyond it to the coming of our Lord, or of the epoch-making importance of the work and the words of the prophets, he has not an idea.

How is this ignorance of so great and influential a literature to be accounted for, an ignorance which is unhappily nearly as dense among tens of thousands of Church members as among the millions who stand without her pale, and which is all the more surprising in view of the nominal respect paid by the Church to the Bible? For one thing, the Bible is not so well known as it once was, because it is not so much read. The old habit of family worship has practically disappeared from many Christian homes, and with it the familiarity which came from hearing a portion of it read every day of the year. The Scripture lessons at the Church services might be a partial compensation for this so grievous loss, but the prevalent habit of attending only one Sunday service reduces by one half even this scanty opportunity for cultivating acquaintance with the words of the Bible. Never has Biblical Science been prosecuted by scholars with such assiduity as to-day, yet never has the Bible been so universally neglected by the people. That is the paradoxical situation which confronts us to-day.

We have also to reckon with the idea, consciously or sub-consciously held, that the Bible is an ancient book and out of date. Its world is not our world, its political and social problems

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are not ours, and what can the wisest of its men have to say to an age that has seen two thousand years more of history? Page after page of the Bible will seem to the casual reader hopelessly irrelevant to the world in which he lives and moves: they transport him into a shadow world, dead and gone for ever. What to him with his strikes and lock-outs, his problems of import and export, of rates and taxes, of living wage and dole, are Moab and Ammon, Assyria and Babylon, even Israel and Judah, now all as dead as the languages which once they spoke? An atmosphere of unreality envelops him as he reads, if he reads at all, and he concludes that whatever this may mean for the scholar, it means nothing for him. Doubtless this is an inexcusably shallow view alike of history and of literature, but it is nevertheless sub-consciously operative in many a mind.

Another influence tending to promote the popular neglect of the Bible is the idea that it is a dull book. Our own age is titillated as no age has ever been before. The cinema makes its easy appeal to the eye; it encourages in millions of spectators weekly the taste for sentimentality and thrills, it develops the appetite for the spectacular, and the mind which nourishes itself upon no other intellectual pabulum than that which is afforded by the screen is ill at ease when it confronts literature that demands serious effort or sustained attention. Whatever does not carry its attractiveness on the face of it is by this type of mind resented and rejected. The effect

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of the wireless broadcast, beneficent and educative as much of it is, is in this respect not dissimilar. It presents the fruits of knowledge in interesting and easily assimilable ways, and demands from the hearer the minimum of intellectual effort. We are living, as someone has said, in the tabloid age. Sermons, like paragraphs, must be short, bright and breezy.

The mind we have been describing is not likely to feel at home among the austerities of the Bible, and there are stretches of it which, it must be confessed, are not exactly calculated to attract the desultory reader. He may not only find them dull, but with the best will in the world he cannot see how they make for edification, at any rate for *his* edification. Should he turn to Chronicles, he will find the first nine chapters devoted to unedifying genealogies, which mean nothing either to his mind or heart. Should he chance upon the seventh chapter of Numbers, he will find six verses containing an enumeration of gifts repeated with wearisome iteration twelve times over, with no change except in the names of the givers. Should he light upon the last nine chapters of Ezekiel, they will seem to him nothing but a desert of ritual regulations, broken only by an oasis of twelve verses in chap. xlvii, which describe the marvellous river that flowed from under the threshold of the temple, carrying beauty and blessing along its course. If any chance leads him to pursue his way through Leviticus, it will inevitably seem to him remote and irrelevant to the last degree. Except for a

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few sporadic laws of peculiarly noble moral quality (cf. xix. 9-18), it consists almost entirely of regulations affecting various kinds of sacrificial offerings, methods of purification from uncleanness, and the like—regulations which have no conceivable relation to his own life, interesting perhaps to the student of ancient religious usage, but practically devoid of interest to-day even to devout members of a ritualistic Church, and definitely relegated by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to the realm of superseded things because of "the weakness and unprofitableness thereof" (vii. 18). There can be little doubt that one reason for the modern man's neglect of the Bible has been the insistence of certain types of Christianity upon the ritual and legal aspects of the Old Testament, and, by way of revulsion, he is apt, as the Germans say, to empty out the child with the bath.

When he turns from the ritual to the historical books, he still fails to find the sort of interest he is accustomed to look for in a modern history. In the Book of Kings, which covers about four centuries (970-586 B.C.) the only points at which the narrative expands to anything like desirability are the reign of Solomon (1 Kings ii-xi) and the careers of Elijah and Elisha. The final siege and destruction of Jerusalem, with all the associated drama of privation, courage, endurance, despair, are dismissed in ten verses (2 Kings xxv. 1-10). The investment of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii f.) and the reformation of Josiah (xxii f.) are described with some detail,

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but not nearly sufficient to satisfy the modern man's appetite for a story. For the rest we have the reigns of great kings introduced and summarized in stereotyped phrases which merely state that they did or did not do that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, and that they did, or did not, remove the high places.

It would of course be a gross travesty of the Old Testament to assert that such passages as we have alluded to are exhaustive or typical of its interest. One half of the Old Testament is left entirely untouched by a criticism built upon these passages—the Psalms, the Prophets as a whole, and the Wisdom books (Job, Prov., Eccl.); and even to the historical books this criticism is highly unjust. For what could be more interesting than the patriarchal tales of Genesis, or the lovely idyll of Ruth, or the story of the rise of the monarchy in 1 Samuel or of the reign of David and the rebellion of Absalom in 2 Samuel or of the patriotic enterprise of Nehemiah? There may be dull patches; but taking the Old Testament as a whole, only ignorance could vote it dull.

There is more substance in the plea that the Bible is difficult. Here again the retort is easy: large areas—and many of these happily the most important—are so simple that a child can understand them. So far as style and thought are concerned, practically all the historical books, most of the psalms, all of the gospels, are intelligible to everybody, and for devotional purposes these are the books that matter most. But the

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criticism of the last half-century has revealed beyond challenge the immense and central importance of the prophets, and it would be affectation to deny that for the most part the prophets, like the epistles, make very hard reading. Doubtless there are chapters which make an immediate appeal to the plain man, such as the thirty-fifth or the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, and there are even books, like Amos, whose general drift may be caught by a careful and intelligent reader: but there is not a single book and hardly a single chapter of prophecy (except the quasi-historical book of Jonah) which could be read with full understanding by an untrained reader from end to end. If a New Testament writer found some things in the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul" hard to be understood (2 Pet. iii. 16), we need not be ashamed to make the same confession with regard to the prophets. Even great scholars make this admission unabashedly. Professor Budde, of Marburg, tells that Professor Socin once asked him if he understood the Minor Prophets, and when he replied that many things in them he found difficult enough, Socin expressed his profound relief, because, he said, he himself did not understand them at all.

The difficulties they present are due in part to the uncertainties of the text. The Book of Hosea, e.g., is full of textual perplexities, and similar difficulties abound in other sections of the Old Testament, such as the Psalms or the Book of Job. The occasional phrases which seem so

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meaningless in our English translation are really attempts to translate an unintelligible text. Sometimes, too, where the text is certain enough, the meaning is rather needlessly obscured by the translation: e.g., "the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness" (Isa. x. 22), or "he pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet" (Isa. xli. 3)—it can hardly be said that such sentences carry their meaning on the face of them. Again contiguous sections of prophecy are not necessarily connected either in substance or in time. The various paragraphs constituting a chapter (e.g., Isa. i) may represent fragments or summaries of addresses spoken on widely different occasions, and the reader is apt to look for connections where there are none.

But the most fatal obstacle to the understanding of prophecy is ignorance of its historical background. Most of the prophetic books are prefaced by a statement of the reign or the period during which the prophecies they contain were uttered. That is, these words are related strictly to that historical situation and to no other, and without some knowledge of that situation they are not fully intelligible, in many cases they are not intelligible at all. They were addressed primarily not to us, but to the contemporaries of the prophet; and until we qualify ourselves by study to place ourselves among those contemporaries, we cannot hope completely to understand them. Doubtless much of our knowledge of the social and political conditions

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to which the prophets addressed themselves comes from the writings of the prophets themselves, but the scattered facts and hints have to be imaginatively combined into a living picture of that ancient society. The key to Amos, e.g., is the rise and growth of trade and commerce, consequent upon the national recovery from harassing wars, a commerce which had issued in a cruel commercialism and the exploitation of the poor: behind the appeal of Hosea lies the chaos into which the northern kingdom was plunging in its closing years under the double pressure of Assyria and Egypt and its own inherent rottenness. Haggai and Zechariah are to be read in the light of the exalted hopes stirred in patriotic breasts by the temporary confusion of the empire whose vassals they were. And so on. Everywhere the prophetic message is interwoven with history. Sometimes its background is not directly acknowledged in introductory words but has to be inferred from its content. The background of Isaiah xl-lv, e.g., is the Babylonian exile: the express mention of Babylon (xlviii. 20) and of Cyrus (xliv. 28; xlv. 1) puts this beyond doubt. But, when this is realized, how significant the great words of the prophecy become! The fortieth chapter with its wonderful vision of a God who is at once the omnipotent Lord of the starry hosts (v. 26) and the kind Shepherd who carries the lambs in His bosom (v. 11), is clothed with fresh meaning and with a deeper power to comfort (v. 1), when it is seen to have been first addressed to broken-hearted exiles who

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lament that their way is hidden from the LORD and that the justice of their case is being passed over by their God (v. 27). Everywhere it is the same. Words that would be radiant anywhere, are doubly luminous when seen in their original setting. Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant to be written upon the heart (xxx. 31 ff.) takes on a new vividness when seen against the ineffective covenant enacted by Josiah some years before and embodied in a book (2 Kings xxii f.). Isaiah's beautiful words, "In quiet trust shall be your strength" (xxx. 15) come home with fresh power when we think of them as first addressed to the terrified inhabitants of beleaguered Jerusalem. At every turn prophecy and history are connected, and it is largely because the history is so little known that prophecy often seems so unintelligible. Few words burn and shine like those of the prophets when their original destination is understood.

To the prosaic Western mind the occasional extravagance—as it must seem—of the Bible constitutes a further difficulty. What does Jesus really mean when He invites the man who has been smitten on the one cheek to turn the other, or the man who has had his coat taken away to offer his cloak also (Mat. v. 39 f.), or when He hints that a true disciple must hate father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters (Luke xiv. 26). We shall never begin to understand these things until we remember that the Bible comes from the imaginative East and that

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our literalistic standards simply do not apply. A friend of mine tells me that, when he was visiting Palestine, his dragoman said he must see Damascus and offered to take him there, promising incidentally to pay all his expenses. He did not in the least mean this, and my friend very well understood that he did not mean this: it was simply his Oriental way of saying that my friend ought to see Damascus and that he would be glad to accompany him. This point is well illustrated by A. M. Rihbany in *The Syrian Christ* (p. 91). "In welcoming me to his house," he says, "an old friend of mine spoke with impressive cheerfulness as follows—'You have extremely honoured me by coming into my abode. I am not worthy of it. This house is yours; you can burn it if you wish. My children also are at your disposal; I would sacrifice them all for your pleasure.' I understood my friend fully and most agreeably, though it was not easy for me to translate his words to my American wife without causing her to be greatly alarmed at the possibility that the house would be set on fire and the children slain for our pleasure. What my friend really meant in his effusive welcome was no more or less than what the gracious American host means when he says, 'I am delighted to see you: please make yourself at home.'"

In extenuation of the neglect of the Bible is sometimes urged its obsolete language (especially that of the more widely used Authorized Version), such as "prevent" in the sense of "anticipate,"

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“be before,” or “let” in the sense of “hinder.” “I *prevented* the dawning of the morning: mine eyes *prevented* the night-watches” (Ps. cxix. 147 f.). “We which”—the *which*¹ may offend a modern ear—“are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not *prevent*¹ them which are asleep” (1 Thess. iv. 15). “He who now *letteth*, will *let*” (2 Thess. ii. 7). Or take such phrases as these: “From thence we *fetch*ed a compass” (Acts xxviii. 13); or “We took up our *carriages*, and went up to Jerusalem” (Acts xxi. 15). It is difficult to believe that anyone who is willing to give the Bible a chance is really deterred by archaisms like these. They are hardly ever unintelligible, they are very seldom misleading, and whatever may be thought of “which” for “who,” the ending in *th* of the third person singular of the present tense invests the style with a certain quaintness which can only be distasteful to those ultra-moderns who have no interest in the rock out of which they were hewn. It is superfluous to praise the simple beauty and the unaffected dignity of the Authorized Version which leaves all subsequent translations immeasurably behind. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch “Understandest thou what thou readest,” he answered, “How can I, except some one should guide me?” (Acts viii. 30 f.). We all at times in our Bible reading share the eunuch’s perplexity and acknowledge our need of guidance. But our perplexity arises from the sort of obscur-

¹ The *that* and *precede* of R.V. are in line with modern usage.

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ities we have already discussed and not from any inherent difficulties in the language of our noble translation, and it seems distinctly disingenuous to plead them in excuse for our neglect. But for those who can plead them sincerely, or who, without being perplexed by the older version, yet desire to read the Bible in the language of their own day, there are not a few versions of it, in whole or part, which will satisfy their taste for modernity, though occasionally at the cost of offending their taste for style.¹

There is more force in the objection that the Bible is usually printed in an unattractive, if not actually repellent, form. The division into chapters and verses, which is relatively modern, is no doubt an immense convenience, but only the most vital of books could have survived so terrific a handicap. Think of *Sesame and Lilies*, or *Heroes and Hero-worship*, or *Maud*, with practically every sentence treated as a paragraph,

¹ Of the whole Bible there are translations by Dr. James Moffatt and Ferrar Fenton; of the Old Testament alone, by Prof. Kent (Student's Old Testament). Very useful is C. G. Montefiore's *Bible for Home Reading*. Several books of it are translated in *Sacred Books of the Old Testament*. Some of its books have also appeared (Gen. Sam. Jer. Amos, etc.), in *Books of the Old Testament in Colloquial Speech* (National Adult School Union). There are also *Jeremiah*, by Driver, *Job* by Mumford, the Psalms by E. H. Sugden, also by W. J. Cooke (Israel's Songs and Meditations), and *The Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and The Wisdom Books* (Jas. Clarke), by myself. For the New Testament, there are Weymouth's Translation, and the Twentieth Century. A good conspectus of the Bible story as a whole is presented by Arthur Mee in *The Children's Bible* (in the words of A. V.), and by William Canton in *The Bible Story*; by Gillie and Reid in the *Bible for Youth*, by C. F. Kent in *The Shorter Bible* (O. T. and N. T. in separate volumes), and in *The Children's Bible* (Cambridge).

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starting a new line, and prefaced by a number; the result of so intolerable a treatment of literature would be almost certainly neglect. But the case of the Bible is much worse: because there, at any rate in the Old Testament, literature of different types and periods is woven together, so that within one book such as Genesis may lie side by side thoughts the most primitive and the most mature. The first chapter, e.g., is the story of Creation as told by the later priestly historian, the second and third chapters (from ii. 4*b*) is that same story as told by a much earlier prophetic historian and obviously embodies very primitive material: indeed the anthropomorphisms of the earlier narrative are implicitly corrected by the austere reticence of the later. Similarly in 1 Samuel viii-x two accounts of the origin of the monarchy are interwoven, an earlier one, friendly to the monarchy and a later, unfriendly. Until these and similar narratives are sifted out by criticism and presented separately, it is hardly possible to gain a true idea of the development of Hebrew thought. Again, the prophecies of Isaiah of Jerusalem are confined within the first thirty-nine chapters of the book known by his name, the next sixteen chapters (xl-lv) come from the exile and are nearly two centuries later, while the remaining chapters (lvi-lxvi) are nearly a century later still. It is as if events of English history as recorded by historians of widely different periods were pieced together without any express indication of their date, or of the point at which one ended and the other began. Apart

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from that the true literary impression is still further obscured in the Authorized Version by the printing of poetry as prose. Not only does the poetry of Psalms and Proverbs, however obvious to the ear, make no appeal to the eye, but the casual reader gets no inkling of the fact that there is much poetry scattered throughout the historical books, e.g., Lamech's Song of Vengeance in Gen. iv. 23 f., the verses that were chanted as the ark went forth to or returned from battle (Num. x. 35 f.), etc. This defect is to a considerable extent remedied in the Revised Version, but by no means completely, as it still prints the prophecies, which are mainly poetical, in the form of prose. In this respect the Jewish American Version is more just to the prophets. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch in his *Art of Reading*¹ has amusingly caricatured the confusion created for the reader of the English Bible by the form in which it is presented. He asks us "to imagine a volume including the great books of our own literature all bound together in some such order as this: *Paradise Lost*, Darwin's *Descent of Man*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Walter Map, Mill on Liberty, Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*," and so on through fourteen lines more, ending with Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*. He then asks us to imagine that in this volume most of the authors' names are lost, and that of the few that survive, a number have found their way into wrong places, Ruskin, e.g., being credited with *Sartor Resartus*. Finally we are to imagine all the

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long paragraphs of prose, much of which represents poetry, "broken up into short verses, so that they resemble the little passages set out for parsing or analysis in an examination paper."

The neglect of the Bible is further encouraged by the suspicion that its old authority is gone. Once it was the "Word of God," humbly and gratefully accepted as such by the devout; now it is a literature, which has to take its place among the other literatures of the world, a Word of Man, exposed to challenge like other words of men. Every idea and institution, however venerable, has to-day to justify itself afresh. The modern instinct is not to bow, but to challenge, and to accept only that which commends itself to intellect and conscience. The Bible is not afraid of such a challenge, it is prepared to meet the demands of the mind as well as the aspirations of the heart: the Book of Job is one of the most challenging books in the world. But those who know neither the daring nor the sweet reasonableness of the Bible are apt to ignore it as a book whose ancient authority has been undermined; and they are encouraged in this attitude by a misapprehension as to the real nature of the work of Biblical scholars. They mistakenly suppose that their attitude is "destructive,"¹ and they would justify their belief by pointing to the radical transformations of traditional belief about the Bible, effected by

¹ B. Snell has well said: it is destructive "only as a pile of bricks is destroyed when the house is built; instead of unity, which was formal and mechanical, the whole becomes vital and organic" (*Gain or Loss?* p. 51).

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modern Biblical scholarship. Not being aware that the only things that scholarship desires to destroy are misconceptions, they regard all criticism as an "attack," and unhappily such a book as the late Professor Friedrich Delitzsch's *Die grosse Täuschung* lends a certain colour to this view. But such books are rare, and the argument of this particular book has been warmly repudiated by Old Testament scholars in Germany itself as well as elsewhere, as entirely misrepresenting the attitude of modern scholarship to the Old Testament and travestying a view of inspiration which practically all educated men have abandoned. Nevertheless the whole enterprise of criticism, quite apart from its assured or tentative conclusions, has created an atmosphere unfavourable to a wide and ready appreciation of the Bible.

THE REMEDY

WE have discussed some of the reasons for the prevalent neglect of the Bible. What is the remedy? The remedy may be sought in four directions—(i) in a better acquaintance with current literature dealing with Biblical books and topics; in improved methods of (ii) day-school, and (iii) Sunday school teaching; and (iv) in greater emphasis by the working ministry on Biblical exposition.

(i) Since the appearance of Robertson Smith's epoch-making book on *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, there has been a large and ever-

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increasing output of books¹ dealing in a scientific yet thoroughly popular fashion with the new approach to the Bible. Indeed they are so numerous and so good that it is almost invidious to make a selection, but a few may be mentioned. To confine the discussion to the Old Testament alone, there are, first of all, books which explain the principles and methods of criticism and enunciate some of its results: e.g., *The Higher Criticism*, by S. R. Driver and A. F. Kirkpatrick; *On Holy Scripture and Criticism*, by H. E. Ryle; *The Nature of Scripture* and (more elaborate) *The Bible: Its Origin, its Significance and its Abiding Worth*, by A. S. Peake; *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, by R. Kittel; *The Meaning of the Old Testament*, by Hugh Martin; *The Challenge of the Book*, by W. G. Jordan (Jackson Press, Kingston, Ont.); *The Methods of Higher Criticism*, an essay by T. H. Robinson (in *The People and the Book*, edited by A. S. Peake); *A Study of the Old Testament*, by J. W. Povah; *The Old Testament and To-day*, by J. A. Chapman and L. D. Weatherhead; *The Canon of the Old Testament*, by H. E. Ryle. Then there are two inexpensive series of commentaries on the various books of the Bible, written from the standpoint of modern criticism, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* and *The Century Bible*.²

¹ A useful *Scripture Bibliography*, covering both Old and New Testament, has been published at 6d. by Nisbet & Co.

² Simpler and shorter still, so far as it has appeared, is *The Old Testament for Schools* (Rivingtons), edited by A. R. Whitham. To the series mentioned should be added, for America, the vols. of *The Bible for Home and School* (Macmillan), edited by Shailer Mathews.

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For those who do not care for detailed exposition, there are other series that deal with the Biblical material in a broader and less elaborate way, notably the *Messages of the Bible* series and the *Humanism of the Bible* series (Jas. Clarke & Co.). Busy people, for whom even this treatment is too elaborate, will find their needs met in the one volume Commentary on the whole Bible, edited by J. R. Dummelow (Macmillan), or, better still, in the one volume Commentary edited by Prof. A. S. Peake (T. C. & E. C. Jack.) These inexpensive commentaries, of which the latter is the ampler, represent the best modern scholarship, and their value is greatly enhanced by a series of prefatory essays which, besides furnishing an immense amount of useful information on such subjects as Biblical History and the Canon, set forth clearly and briefly the attitude of modern scholarship to many topics on which the bewildered student of the Bible needs guidance.

Now few of these books are widely read: even the most popular of them are nothing like so popular as they ought to be. The idea that a book dealing with the Bible must be dull dies hard. In point of fact many of the books written to-day about the Bible are of absorbing interest: criticism has invested the study of Old Testament literature, Hebrew history, and the development of Hebrew thought, with a fascination which it never had before and which is gladly confessed by all who have put themselves under its spell. But how few they are! When one

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thinks of the millions of Church members in English-speaking lands, presumably interested in the Book which is the literary foundation of their Christian life, the poor response to the work of the scholars who are spending their lives in the effort to interpret that Book in a living way to their generation, is not only pathetic, it is unintelligible, or intelligible only on the assumption that the interest of such people in the Bible is more nominal than real. There are multitudes of Christian laymen who regularly buy books on economics or history or biography or travel, but who never in their lives have bought a book by a modern scholar on the Bible. If such books were more widely read by those who pay a lip-service to the Bible as the Word of God, there would be less hostility to criticism and less neglect of the Bible itself.

(ii) Inadequate Bible teaching in day schools has also something to do with the neglect of the Bible in later life. Doubtless, as someone has said, religion is caught rather than taught; a teacher of deeply religious personality is of far more consequence to the spiritual life of a class than a mere instructor, however skilful and well-equipped. But in so far as an attempt is made to create religious impressions through the teaching of the Bible, it is essential that that teaching should be in harmony with the broad results of expert Biblical scholarship and with the best thought of the time. A child must not be asked to accept ideas or statements of fact which his maturer judgment will instinctively repudiate: in other

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words, while it would be unreasonable to expect the teacher responsible for Bible instruction to have an expert knowledge of Biblical science, he ought to have at least a bowing acquaintance with its methods and results. Fortunately both in England and Scotland there is a growing recognition of this necessity, and in Scotland the future teachers receive their Bible instruction from a Biblical expert. But it is not so very long since day school pupils were expected to know the names of the nine kings who fought—four against five—in the vale of Siddim, as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, and to memorize a series of so-called Messianic passages, rudely torn from their context, beginning with Genesis iii. 15, continuing with Balaam's prophecy of the Star and the Sceptre in Numbers xxiv. 17, advancing to the promise of the Prophet in Deuteronomy xviii. 18, and so forth through the other books to "the desire of all nations" in Haggai ii. 7—passages in some of which, through the adroit use of capitals in our Authorized Version, the original meaning is hopelessly obscured. It is gloriously true that Jesus is the fulfilment of that marvellous spiritual movement of which the Old Testament is the literary record (Matt. v. 17; 2 Cor. i. 20), but it is not by the stringing together of isolated passages that that conviction is borne in upon the mind.

But it is not enough that the teacher have a modern outlook, he must be free to teach in accordance with that outlook. Progressive teachers are sometimes unjustly hampered by the

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system within which they are caught. Twenty years ago it was possible for the School Board of Glasgow to set the following questions¹ at the examination in Religious Knowledge: "What was God's work of Creation (i) on the First day, and (ii) on the Sixth day? What happened on the Seventh day?" (21st May, 1906). So far as examination questions are concerned, the intervening years have seen little improvement. On the paper set by the Glasgow Education Authority for the 2nd June, 1921, appeared the question: "How did God tempt Abraham?" On 31st May, 1923, "Who were our first parents? Where was their home? On what condition were they allowed to retain possession?" On 29th May, 1924, "Tell how Eve was created and why?" On 28th May, 1925, "Quote as fully as you can God's Blessing on our First parents at their creation." It is to be hoped that questions like these did not fall into the hands of any teacher of Natural Science. One would have supposed that the day was past when the story of the creation of Eve would be treated as sober historical fact. Wanton injustice is done to the fine imagination of those ancient tales when they are laid in the Procrustean bed of a prosaic literalism. Questions like some of those we have quoted can only excite derision in men who understand the thought and share the culture of to-day, and they can only contribute to the neglect

¹ Some of these questions may be condoned on the assumption that the object of the religious lesson is to familiarize the scholar with the words of Scripture.

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which the Bible continues to endure at the hands of those who might have been taught to love it. The reconciliation between Science and Religion is yet a long way off, when such things are still possible in the schools of our land.

(iii) The case is even worse with the Sunday school. All honour is due to those who, by publishing up-to-date magazines¹ for teachers embodying sound Biblical scholarship, by giving wise individual guidance, and by holding regular meetings for the instruction of teachers in the lessons they will have to teach, are making gallant and not unsuccessful attempts to put the whole business of Biblical instruction upon a worthier basis. But the response to these efforts is seldom so wide or so generous as it should be. Classes for teachers, even when conducted by eminent Biblical scholars, are often disappointingly small. Piety is an excellent thing, but it is not an entirely satisfactory substitute for knowledge. The devotion of many ill-equipped teachers is beyond all praise: but scholars who are taught their secular subjects by men and women who understand them are quick to detect the inadequacies of teachers who do not bring the same knowledge and skill to their interpretation of the Bible. What is needed on the part of teachers is a more resolute attempt to qualify, in mind no less than in heart, for this high task, and a more con-

¹ Besides the denominational magazines, the *Homiletic Review* deals in modern fashion with the International Sunday School lessons.

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scientific study of such helps as are available.

(iv) Of not less importance in the task of enlightenment is the work of the Christian minister. Rightly or wrongly it is commonly held that the Church does not do enough to acquaint the people with the work of Biblical scholars and, in general, with the modern attitude to the Bible: the men who might authoritatively expound it are silent. The minister might easily retort that he has other and more important work to do: his first business is the "cure of souls," it is his to stimulate, to encourage, to warn, to comfort. He has only thirty minutes in which to deal with the high affairs of the soul, and he cannot afford to be deflected into the discussion of issues of lesser moment; he must concentrate upon the things that supremely matter. There is much truth in this contention; still, it does not seem unreasonable to expect the minister to guide his people in their religious thinking, and to deal—not indeed often, but at any rate occasionally—with perplexities that have been raised in the minds of some of his congregation by the modern study of the Bible or by rumours of that study. Even without touching upon specific problems, he could enhance the interest and profit of his pulpit work by consecutive expositions, e.g., of prophetic books, which would embody in popular form the rich fruitage of modern Biblical scholarship. It has been proved again and again that, when this is well done, there are few things which congregations

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welcome more. The habit of preaching from single texts is apt to obscure the vision of the book as a whole, and one may listen for years to such preaching without winning any real impression of the great personalities or of the historical and spiritual movements reflected in the Bible. That the Bible is not better known is at least partly due to the fact that it is so seldom presented in this vital and consecutive way.

But further, the preacher may take an occasional opportunity of discussing in a broad way the modern attitude to the Bible, and specific problems arising out of that attitude—the treatment in Genesis, e.g., of the Creation or the Fall or the Flood, or the moral difficulties of the Old Testament such as those with which we have dealt in Chapter II, or the development of the Biblical idea of God or duty, or the different types of religious thought and ideal which come to expression in the Bible, or the difference that Jesus made, e.g., to the Old Testament conception of man, God, prayer, duty, life, death, the future, etc. Sermons or lectures on topics like these, besides contributing to religious edification, would gradually create within the minds of the hearers a real historical appreciation of the Bible, develop the sense of it as the literary record of an age-long movement, and bring home the conviction that the grateful acceptance of the Bible as one of God's supreme gifts to men is perfectly compatible with intellectual honesty and with the full recognition of the rights of modern thought. The Bishop of Birmingham did not

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overstate the case when he said,¹ "We must rebuild the intellectual foundations, incorporating the new knowledge, and we shall make little progress till that is done. The battle between traditional belief and modernism cannot be avoided, and, so long as it continues, it will be disturbing to many good people. But faith can only commend itself to the rising generation through reason. The lack of certainty in regard to religious truth is at present working disastrously in the public mind, and nothing short of a re-statement of the Christian faith in modern terms will reassure our people." The preacher who keeps abreast of contemporary thought and who has the courage to keep his people in touch with it, can do much to prepare the public mind for this re-statement.

But it does require courage, just as it requires discretion. The preacher may be deterred by honourable fears—the fear of disturbing the young, the fear of offending the old. But so far as the young are concerned, they are disturbed already; they are very well aware of the criticisms, friendly and unfriendly, that are being levelled at the Bible: and a frank and constructive discussion by the minister whom they trust is far more likely to allay than to augment their perplexities. It is a mistake to suppose that, by a policy of silence, a preacher can safeguard the "orthodox" of his congregation, or a teacher of his pupils: such a policy may lead either to

¹ In an interview reported in the *Christian World* for 5th February, 1925.

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intellectual petrification or to intellectual revolt. Bernard Snell¹ has aptly reminded us that "Voltaire was trained by the Jesuits, Renan was educated in the intensely orthodox seminary of St. Sulpice, Bradlaugh was reared in narrow Evangelicalism, George Eliot's Positivism was the reaction from impossible doctrines instilled in early days." Like Professor Henry Drummond who, as his biographer tells us, "often said that the critical movement had removed very many difficulties in the Old Testament which puzzled him,"² there are many to whom the frank presentation of the things most surely believed among modern Christian scholars, so far from being unwelcome or unsettling, would be an immense relief. The same biographer has told us in his Yale Lectures³ that Drummond's large correspondence revealed the fact that the insistence on "the literal acceptance of the Bible—the faith which finds in it nothing erroneous, nothing defective, and (outside of the sacrifices and Temple) nothing temporary," had driven multitudes away from religion. Miss Maude Royden has related an experience of her own, which suggests that more people are prepared to welcome the new approach to the Bible than ecclesiastics sometimes imagine. She had listened to an address on *The Value of the Old Testament* by a great scholar, "which came with all the

¹ *Gain or Loss?* pp. 93 f.

² Sir George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, p. 131.

³ *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 27.

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force of revelation. A clergyman said it would do harm, if delivered to an ordinary congregation. The 'ordinary' people there were surprised at this criticism and more so when the speaker said he would not dream of doing so. We should feel our faith crumble if anyone were to suggest that the story of Adam and Eve is not history? No!" she goes on warmly, "it is the pretence that it is history that has made some of us lose our faith, if not in God, certainly in His Church. We also have some small degree of intelligence. Why have you not given us the truth that would make us free?"¹

A sympathetic treatment of the Book of Jonah, e.g., as a singularly winning Old Testament sermon on the text "God so loved the world" would be the final answer, on the one hand, to the miserable sneers at the episode of the "great fish," and, on the other, to the very unnecessary and unconvincing defences of that episode, which, after all, plays so insignificant a part in the story. The prejudices of the old one can only respect, but is it fair that they be allowed to interfere with the enlightenment of the young? Faith can have nothing to fear from an honest and reverent discussion: and the old will not, if they are wise, grudge the young a liberty which will enable them to retain alike their appreciation of the Bible and their intellectual integrity. Thus, we may hope, the hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. There is indeed such a thing

¹ *The Hour and the Church*, pp. 49 f.

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as Christian expediency: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." It ought not to be forgotten, however, that it was not the habit of Jesus to conciliate prejudices which stood in the way of His truth. His criticism of current conceptions of divorce (Mark x. 1-12) and of traditional ritual (Mark vii. 1-13), His own attitude and the attitude of His disciples to the Sabbath (ii. 23-iii. 6) which was a flagrant defiance of that prevailing in orthodox religious circles, these and similar challenges roused the leaders of the Church to fury, and contributed to the envenomed animosity which finally brought Him to His Cross. And Paul, the Master's greatest servant, Paul whom Christ had set free to be never again entangled with any yoke of bondage, save to the Christ who had set him free, shows the same fearless spirit of challenge in his criticism of circumcision (Gal. v. 2, 6). When we remember what circumcision and the Sabbath and the "tradition of the elders" and, in general, the law were to the Jew of the time of Jesus and Paul; when we see how deliberately these things were by them either challenged or re-interpreted; and when we realize that these challenges and re-interpretations were received by the conventional representatives of the Jewish Church not only with sorrow of heart but with gnashing of teeth: it becomes possible to maintain that there are times when, in the interests of religion itself, ancient and deep-seated prejudices, and, above all, the "tradition of the elders," may have to be deliberately challenged.

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They have to be challenged if for no other reason than that the glorious thing we call religion be disentangled from beliefs and traditions which in the course of time have become associated with it, but with which it has essentially nothing whatever to do. When we are told, for example, that of the "many alleged contradictions" to be found in Scripture, "some still remain with us, *to try our faith*," we ask in astonishment what sort of faith in God is it that can be disturbed by discrepancies in a literary record? Faith in that record as preserving the *ipsissima verba* of God or as defined by Dean Burgon, may well be disturbed, but surely not faith in the great God of all the ages and of all the worlds. So strange an idea would only be tenable if we had positive proof that God was the sole Author of the Bible, and that its divine integrity had been entirely unaffected by human transmission; but the facts adduced in the chapter on Verbal Inspiration are sufficient to dispose once and for ever of such an idea. It is surely as plain as day that the faith which inspired the heroes of Hebrews xi to do and to dare and to endure has nothing to do with the literalistic interpretation of a book: it is the power to see the Unseen (xi. 27). The very mention of Rahab and Gideon and Samson as exhibiting this "faith" (*vv.* 31 f.) is enough to show how futile and unjust is its implication in "alleged contradictions" found within a book, however sacred. Those who thus confuse the essence of religion with its accidents have to be recalled to the Bible's own conception of religion:

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in the Old Testament, "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God" (Mic. vi. 8), in the New, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James i. 27). These definitions are not exhaustive, but they are typical, they commend themselves to our reason and conscience, and they have little enough to do with the question whether Asa did or did not remove the high places (2 Chron. xiv. 5; xv. 17) or whether there is one Isaiah or two or three. These are not the things by which men live. The date and structure of a Biblical book are literary and historical questions to be settled, if they can be, quite dispassionately by the scholar and the historian; but for the purposes of living, it is the substance of the book that matters. The joy in our native land which wells up in our hearts as we read the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and its solemn warning against national arrogance and forgetfulness of God, would not be diminished by one iota if the book could be proved to have been written in the seventh century B.C. rather than in the time of Moses. Whatever be its date, it "finds" us, and *for the purposes of religion* as distinguished from historical and literary criticism, that is all that matters. When that distinction comes to be clearly grasped by a mind that has been perplexed, an emancipating day has dawned.

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IN the Bohlen Lectures for 1925, Professor W. Cosby Bell truly remarks¹ that in the Christian Church "what is wanted is education, not polemics. And in any discussion within the Church as to the form of her faith, the most important thing of all to preserve is the spirit of fellowship. When that is lost all verbal victories are pyrrhic victories—they convince nobody and leave the situation not better but worse." This does not mean that controversy is in itself objectionable; it is inevitable. *Quot homines, tot sententiæ*, and diversities of intellectual temperament will be reflected in the interpretation of any given order of facts. While we approach the Bible with reverence, we are equally bound to approach it "with the understanding also."² The mind must be applied to the Biblical data, and minds differ—in their training, their bias, and their capacity. But everything depends on the spirit in which controversy is conducted, and controversy conducted in the spirit of warfare is objectionable. The aim of all honourable controversy is not to triumph over an opponent, but to contribute to the truth. And this is only possible to just and sympathetic minds, to minds that are willing to examine an opponent's case sympathetically and are prepared to learn from

¹ *Sharing in Creation* p. 58.

² Twice over in 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

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it, to minds that love the truth so earnestly that they are prepared to "scorn delights and live laborious days" in the search for it. Biblical science is as truly a science as any other, it demands the same keen devotion, the same patient research, as the physical sciences; and when by some genuine effort of hard study we have begun to understand the intricacy of its problems, and when we remember that hundreds of books and magazine articles by devoted scholars who are spending not their leisure, but their whole lives in the investigation, are published every year in many languages and in many lands, we must in fairness recognize that their conclusions are entitled to the same respect as we willingly accord to similar workers in other fields of investigation. Who is sufficient for these things? There are two men at any rate who are not sufficient—the man who mistakes abuse for argument, and the man who has neither the time nor the training nor the inclination to equip himself properly for so many-sided and complicated a task.¹

The pathos of the controversy, so far as it affects the Old Testament, is that many of the points in dispute between conservatives and moderate critical scholars are relatively trivial—

¹ Dr. Alexander Whyte's words are as timely to-day as when they were written, in connection with the Robertson Smith case, nearly fifty years ago (1877): "The traditions and prepossessions of those who cannot be familiar with critical and scientific questions are not to be allowed to trammel the hands and brand the names of men who are doing some of the Church's selectest and most delicate work." (G. F. Barbour, *Life of Alexander Whyte*, p. 210.)

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trivial, that is, in relation to the life we have to live and the work we have to do in this world as men and as Christians. If it be true, as the critics believe, that there are two discrepant accounts of the site of the Tent of Meeting, one in which that tent is pitched "*outside* the camp, afar off from the camp" (Exod. xxxiii. 7), and another in which it appears as "*in the midst* of the camp" conceived as four-square (Num. ii. 17), what can that conceivably matter to the Christian life? or how should that shake the faith of a man whose "life is hid with Christ in God"? The man who knows in Whom he has believed may dispassionately examine all such alleged discrepancies and unhesitatingly accept them, if proved, in the assurance that, though they may modify his views of the literary structure of a book or of the history of Hebrew literature, they matter simply nothing at all to his inner life, which is anchored in far other things. We could be at peace with ourselves and keep peace with our fellows, if we learned to cultivate a sense of perspective and to distinguish between the relevant and the irrelevant. Faith, hope, love, repentance, forgiveness, patience, charity—these and the like are the marks of the religious life, and of these neither the conservative nor the critic to whose methods and conclusions he is opposed has any monopoly: the fruits of the spirit may be exhibited as abundantly by the one as by the other, and it is "by their fruits ye shall know them." In all that is relevant to religion they are, or at any

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rate they may be and should be, brethren. Travellers as they are on the same voyage to the same desired haven, believing as they do in the seaworthiness of the ship and trusting as they do to the same Pilot, how sad and foolish to mar the harmony of the voyage by acrimonious discussion about the rivets and ropes. Or, to change the metaphor, our shattered world is in sore need of rebuilding, and every vital force within the Church is necessary for its reconstruction. The world makes merry over the spectacle of a Church divided over what it can only regard as trivialities; and at such a time as this we who are exposed, justly or unjustly, to this reproach, would do well to take heed to the trumpet-call of Nehemiah, "Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (ii. 17).

It is in this fraternal and irenic spirit that I propose to examine briefly some recent phases of the conservative defence. That defence is conducted with very varying degrees of ability and knowledge. Some writers, like Dr. Orr or Mr. Finn, display a large command of the material—both the Biblical data and the critical construction of it; but being temperamentally inclined, especially the more popular writers, to acquiesce in traditional explanations of difficulties—to reconcile inconsistencies, e.g., by some harmonistic device, however improbable, rather than frankly acknowledge them and allow them to modify the traditional explanation—they do not permit their minds to play as freely or naturally upon the facts as a more emancipated

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mind would do. There are other writers, however, whose zeal is more conspicuous than their acquaintance with the facts; and the value of the defence conducted by such writers and speakers, however deeply it may impress the uninitiated, is usually in inverse proportion to its vehemence. When, e.g., at the end of a useful and interesting little book on "The Bible and How it Came to Us," Mr. F. G. Jannaway goes out of his way to add a four-page Appendix entitled, "Higher Critics the Enemies of Christ," in the course of which he trounces Bishop Gore, and when we remember that the attitude of Bishop Gore is shared by Sir George Adam Smith, Dr. Horton, Professor Peake and a score of others whose praise is in all the Churches for the light and inspiration they have brought to thoughtful minds, we begin to realize how much easier it is to label an opponent than to take the trouble to understand him. Anyone endowed with even the most elementary sense of justice must recognize that four short pages furnish hardly enough scope to justify so grave a libel. It is not by misrepresentation, however sincere, that the cause either of truth or religion is advanced.

As characteristic illustrations of the conservative defence we select four recent books, touching briefly on the first three and dealing more fully with the last. The volumes in question are Dr. Martin Kegel's *Away from Wellhausen*, Professor Thomas Jollie Smith's *Studies in Criticism and Revelation*, Mr. H. D. Woolley's

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The Modernist Bible and How Compiled, and Dr. W. H. Fitchett's *Where the Higher Criticism Fails*.¹

MARTIN KEGEL

We turn first to Kegel, partly because his book illustrates the nobler sort of conservatism, and also because it admirably serves to show how little agreement there is among the conservatives themselves. Wellhausen is, of course, the *bête noire* of every section of the conservative school: his so-called "rationalism" offends them all, his literary criticism offends the less well-informed. The chief count in Kegel's indictment of Wellhausen is his "bondage to an empty, self-invented principle of evolution": that is, he is said to bring a philosophical theory to the interpretation of the facts and then to re-arrange the facts chronologically so that they fit the theory. This criticism does not anything like sufficiently reckon with the circumstance that many of the facts, associated as they are with periods whose dates we approximately know, themselves suggest the theory, as in turn they go to confirm it. But that apart, it will not be denied that a grave issue is raised by this view of the history recorded in the Bible, if it is taken to exclude the controlling purpose and superintending providence of God. I have shown in my chapter on "Criticism and the Supernatural" in *Old Testament Criticism*

¹ The last three books are selected not because of their importance, but because of their representative quality: they are thoroughly typical of the average conservative position.

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and the Christian Church that this inference is very far from necessary, and that most critical scholars in English-speaking countries and many even in Germany who fully accept the principle of documentary analysis, deliberately and expressly dissociate themselves from the purely naturalistic interpretation of the history with which they are so persistently charged. On the merits of the case I need not repeat what I have there set forth at length: my desire now is to show that, in spite of what Kegel regards as a fatal disqualification in Wellhausen's equipment for the task of writing a history of Israel, he generously acknowledges, as everyone must who knows the facts, but as many conservatives fail to do, the immense value of Wellhausen's contribution to the scientific study of the Old Testament.

His influence, which Kegel admits to be "still immeasurably great,"¹ has, on Kegel's own admission, been in many directions beneficial. His was not only an acute, but a singularly fructifying and stimulating mind. He saw and stated with extraordinary clearness the difficulties inherent in the traditional conception of the history of Israel, and he raised problems which no honest investigator can evade, and which "still await their full solution."² Wellhausen, as Kegel remarks, "must still be regarded as a great sower, even by those who cannot bestow unqualified admiration upon him."³ We are quite in accord with Kegel when he insists

¹ P. 20.

² P. 96.

³ Pp. 100 f.

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that "we must learn to approach the Old Testament Scriptures with the greater reverence that was so conspicuous in the representatives of the older conservative views in Old Testament scholarship," but that does not prevent him from acknowledging that we must also "seek to acquire the critical acumen of Wellhausen and his school," and that we must recognize it as our foremost task and our chief aim to obtain "a general conception of the course of the history, and in particular of the religious history, of Israel."¹ Wellhausen's conception is not satisfactory to Kegel, but it is a massive and coherent conception and a thing to emulate along different lines. So he has no idea of disputing Wellhausen's "real services to Old Testament scholarship,"² for "he has undoubtedly come to the right conclusions on many details," and it is "impossible that he should ever be overlooked either in the present or the future by Old Testament criticism."³ "Who would seek to deny," he asks,⁴ "that Wellhausen is in point of fact often right in his criticism of the Chronicles?" While objecting to the tone of his reference to that book, he admits that Wellhausen "has succeeded in making it clear that the 'complete divergence in general outlook, as well as the number of partial discrepancies' which we find in the Chronicles on comparing them with the more ancient historical books of the Old Testament, can be uniformly explained

¹ Pp. 124 f.

² P. 99.

³ P. 94.

⁴ P. 76.

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as having originated in the spirit of later Judaism." When he asks, "Who would seek to deny this?" the obvious retort would be that most of the conservative defenders of the Bible, at any rate in the English-speaking world, would deny it with vehemence, for the reason given by Kegel elsewhere¹ that the "conservative theologians of the middle of the nineteenth century"—whose intellectual successors are to-day, speaking generally, to be found rather among the laity than among the theologians or the theologically trained—"frequently would not recognize obvious contradictions, because as such they ran counter to their own dogmatic theories, and endeavoured rather to reconcile both in a false agreement."

Enough has been said to show that the much-decried Wellhausen is regarded even by opponents, who reject what they call his "historico-philosophical presuppositions," as having, in virtue of his historical and literary insight, made contributions of permanent value to Old Testament science. So when we find the Rev. John Macmillan in *The Crucified and Risen Bible* disposing of Wellhausen in ten lines as, *inter alia*, one "who proceeds to lay down the law to the Bible," and continuing with the words, "and mark, it was his law he wanted to lay down. In other words he wished to make a new Bible altogether. That is not criticism," we can only add, "Nor that." So glib an estimate of the work of such a man is on a level with his

¹ Pp. 122 f.

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criticism of Gesenius as a "brilliant literary hack" (p. 65).

T. JOLLIE SMITH

But more surprising in a "Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Studies" is Professor T. J. Smith's allusion to Wellhausen in his *Studies in Criticism and Revelation* (p. 88). "He threw up," we are told, "all his study of Scripture and took to mere secular Arabic studies instead. For that reason alone, if for no other, I must regard this new tradition with great suspicion." Apart from the lurid light which this use of the word "secular" throws on Professor Smith's own attitude to history and life, is he not aware that many of Wellhausen's Arabic studies, notably his *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, were definitely studies in religion, and that when he was sixty, Wellhausen began to apply his exceptional knowledge of the Semitic mind, method and languages to the interpretation of the Gospels?

But there are much more serious things than this in Professor Smith's defence of orthodoxy. In an imaginary dialogue between a young student of Scripture and a "historical critic" of the present day, he represents the critic, in answer to a question of the student about the naturalistic presupposition on which the critic is supposed to interpret the history, as saying, "Yes. Our 'naturalistic presupposition' and our 'historical criticism' are so intermingled together that we do not attempt to separate

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them." The student then asks, "And do you teach that to the people?" To which the critic replies, "Not altogether. *We teach them to laugh at Jonah*, but we dare not go so far as that with our Lord's death and resurrection. *We get them to smile at Daniel*, but we have to leave the Lazarus story alone."¹ "And is that quite honest?" asks the student. "Oh, well," replies the critic, "it is merely using 'camouflage.'" In other words, the critics are made—not very dexterously—to look like knaves or fools, or rather both. But the device is too simple to impose on anybody but a simpleton; besides, it is a flagrant misrepresentation of the facts. The words we have italicized are nothing but a shameless caricature.

The "unbeliever," whom Professor Smith has thus clumsily caricatured, "has no right," we are informed, "to be a Christian minister, and to teach rationalism from our pulpits, intrude it into our text-books, or insinuate it into our school notes. If he be an honourable man he should keep away from that kind of trick." And, we may add, the "believer," if he be an honourable man—as he ought to be, being a "believer"—should keep away from *this* kind of trick.

Who are the "we" who teach the people to smile at Daniel and to laugh at Jonah? Certainly not the responsible teachers of the Old Testament. The latest discussion of Daniel to reach me is a brochure by Professor Walter

¹ Italics mine.

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Baumgartner of the University of Marburg, one of those "historical critics" at whom Professor Smith so unworthily gibes. This is what he says in *Das Buch Daniel*, p. 39 : "What arrests us is the keenness with which it grasps and brings out the contrast between the powers of the world and the kingdom of God. the conviction that all world-history, so far from being the sport of meaningless accident, is moving on in giant cycles which only the eye of faith can follow, towards a goal which is God's; and the rock-firm confidence in the coming of this new order. These are in essence the great thoughts of the prophets. Only what in them is scattered in numberless single words whose significance is often not easy to grasp, has here found its classical expression, concentrated in the magnificent visions of chaps. ii and vii. In times of persecution it has brought courage and comfort, in times of collapse and confusion it has directed the gaze to the coming and the permanent." To this view of the book all critical scholars would subscribe. So far are they from getting their scholars to "smile" at Daniel, Prof. Baumgartner, in discussing its apocalyptic form, expressly says "it would be silly to mock at that," as that was just the literary dress of the period; and the historical critic no more smiles at the "miracles" in the book than at its literary form.

The reference to Jonah is equally inept. We presume that Cornill may be taken as a representative critical scholar: Sellin indeed

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criticizes him on the score of being needlessly radical. And what does Cornill say? In view of Professor Smith's inexplicable slander of the historical critics, one may be pardoned for quoting the famous passage from his *Prophets of Israel*, which is familiar to all who have any acquaintance with the literature of the subject:¹ "I have read the Book of Jonah at least a hundred times, and I will publicly avow, for I am not ashamed of my weakness, that I cannot even now take up this marvellous book, nay, nor even speak of it, without the tears rising to my eyes, and my heart beating higher. This apparently trivial book is one of the deepest and grandest that was ever written, and I should like to say to everyone who approaches it, 'Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' " The truth is that the critical interpretation of Daniel and Jonah has rescued these books from the "smiles" and the "laughter" to which the traditional interpretation inevitably exposed them.

Such caricatures of the critical attitude do not stand alone. On p. 78 Professor Smith asks, "When three supernatural beings met Abram at the door of his tent, what does that mean? Were these beings not really existent? Had they not a home where they lived and worked? Are these things in Scripture all a mere joke?" Again, "Is the Revelation of

¹ English translation (Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago), p. 170: in the German text, *Der israelitische Prophetismus*; pp. 168 f.

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St. John all a kind of marionette comedy for the nineteenth century 'critics' to laugh at?" Who are the critics who maintain that these things are "all a mere joke"? Had Professor Smith examined Gunkel's brilliant commentary on Genesis he would have seen that the spirit in which a student of comparative religion deals with such stories is as remote as possible from that of levity or contempt. No educated man, with a spark of reverence or understanding, would dream of describing these or any other expressions of the ancient religious spirit as "a mere joke." We find on p. 187 in his description of what he loftily designates as the "wild-cat theories" of the "Destructive" critics, that he betrays the same sheer incompetence not only to understand a position with which he disagrees, but to understand the only possible conditions of the progress of any science whatever. "Each of these destructive critics," he tells us, "tries to destroy his predecessor's theories and himself to bring forth something more incredible and more outrageous." Even a babe in the study of history or science would instinctively doubt the justice, or even the probability, of such a statement. The latest refutation of it is the careful "Historical Sketch" by Edward McQueen Gray entitled, *Old Testament Criticism, its Rise and Progress*. This study is only brought down to the end of the eighteenth century, another volume will be necessary to carry the investigation into our own times, and in part the late Professor Cheyne

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has done that for us in his *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*. But the principle is abundantly clear and amply illustrated by sixteen hundred years of criticism—the principle that determines the progress of Old Testament Science as of all science, viz., that a theory which is set up to account for certain facts is modified or replaced, in view of other facts or discoveries, by subsequent theories of other scholars, and these again by others, as the problems are better understood and knowledge grows. It is surely no disparagement of Old Testament Science that it does not pretend to be infallible. No true critic, no sane man, has any interest in setting up anything incredible or outrageous, his sole desire is to come nearer to the truth; and he is willing to learn even from the predecessor whose theory, in view of new facts discovered or old facts which seem to him to have been overlooked or misinterpreted, he feels obliged to modify. The laborious toil of sixteen centuries which is only partially represented by the two hundred books contained in Mr. Gray's Bibliography is too solid and honourable an achievement of the human spirit to be disposed of by any flippant and unsubstantiated reference to "wild-cat theories." Curiously enough, the men who are so ready to denounce the theories of others do not hesitate to offer, without a shadow of proof, theories of their own. On p. 97 Professor Smith informs us that "the early chapters of Genesis we probably owe to Abram." This may seem probable to Professor Smith, to most

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Old Testament scholars of the present day it seems improbable to the point of absurdity. It is at any rate satisfactory that Professor Smith offers no proof and has to content himself with the humble confession that "how they were revealed to him we do not know."

But it were idle to expect much light or leading from a writer whose knowledge of etymology and of the meaning of familiar English words is represented by the following sentences: "It is unfortunate that the English language has taken over from the German"—German!—"the word 'criticism.' In English, 'criticism' implies some disparagement, some opposition, some dislike" (p. 51). We had always been under the impression that the word "criticism" was connected with the Greek, and that a critic was, as its Greek origin implies, and as the "Concise Oxford Dictionary" admits, primarily "one who pronounces judgment," and only in its secondary meaning, "a censurer." So when he tells us on one page, "I take my stand against almost all the theological text-books and the theological magazines" (p. 28), and on the next makes the claim, "I belong to the twentieth century," he might have added "B.C." for any contribution most of his chapters make to the problems that trouble the minds of men. It is a satisfaction to note that Dr. Norwood, of the City Temple, who was asked to write an introduction to the volume, finds himself constrained to say, among other more commendatory things: "It seems to me that he attacks the

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modern critical movement far too entirely as if it were but a hostile thing, and that he expects far too complete a return to an attitude towards the Bible from which many have moved irretrievably away."

H. D. WOOLLEY

We now turn to Mr. H. D. Woolley's *Modernist Bible and How Compiled*. This is a reply to certain articles of my own on *The Bible and Modern Thought* which appeared during October-December of last year in *The Record* of the United Free Church of Scotland. The series ran on to March of this year, and they discussed—necessarily briefly—the whole of the Old Testament; the first three articles carried the discussion only through the Pentateuch and the historical books. Why Mr. Woolley should have chosen to reply before the whole case was presented is best known to himself. There is little that is positively objectionable in the temper of Mr. Woolley's discussion except the unfair reference to my innocent comment on Genesis vi. 7, that in this verse "occurs the pictorial and primitive idea of Jehovah 'repenting,'" as "a critical sneer" (p. 47). In view of such a declaration as that in 1 Samuel xv. 29, that the Strength of Israel "is not a man that he should repent," one wonders whether Mr. Woolley would also be prepared to relegate the writer of that verse among the category of scorners. In all my discussion of the Bible I have never

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consciously written a word which by any just mind could be remotely interpreted as a sneer.

There are some points in Mr. Woolley's statement at which a better knowledge of the facts would have preserved him from dogmatism. In connection with the verse alluded to (Gen. vi. 7), in the course of my proof that there were two documentary sources behind the Flood story, I had mentioned that the word for "destroy" (*māchāh*) was a pictorial word (unlike the more general *hishchîth* in v. 13, which critics believe to be from the other source), and I had called special attention to the fact that the margin of the Revised Version reads "blot out." On this Mr. Woolley comments, "Why styled a 'pictorial' word, it were hard to say. Such an adjective is not befitting the awful judgment of the Deluge, *neither is there anything 'pictorial' in its use elsewhere in the Bible*" (italics mine). If Mr. Woolley will take the trouble to consult the Oxford Hebrew Lexicon, he will find that the uses of the word which receive first mention are *all* pictorial; it is used of wiping the mouth (Prov. xxx. 20), of wiping tears from the face (Isa. xxv. 8), of blotting out curses into water (Num. v. 23), of blotting a name out of a book (Exod. xxxii. 32 f.). Perhaps the best illustration of all is that in 2 Kings xxi. 13, "I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipeth a dish—wiping and turning it upside down": the man who wrote that sentence certainly appears to have been under the impression that *māchāh* was a pictorial word.

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There are other inaccuracies. It is difficult to see how anyone who remembered his Hebrew or who even consulted his Revised Version, could spell Jashar with an *e*, as Mr. Woolley does twice on p. 64. This may be dismissed as a trifle. But much more serious is the statement on p. 44 that whether the name Jehovah (that is, "the LORD" of the English Bible) or Elohim (that is, God) is used "depends on the context. Elohim—'God'—is used more in contrast with creatures; 'Jehovah' when it is a question of Covenant relationship and man's obligations God-ward." This is serious, because critics attach considerable importance to this diverse usage, and believe that in Genesis it is to be explained on the assumption of different documents. If Mr. Woolley's view is sound, obviously it ought to be applicable not only to the Creation story, but throughout the book. Now it happens that there are two accounts of a divine covenant with Abraham, one in Gen. xv, where the name of Deity is Jehovah, one in Gen. xvii, where, with the single exception of the opening verse, the name is Elohim. In other words, in a chapter which deals expressly with a Covenant relationship and where, on Mr. Woolley's principle, the name Jehovah ought to be used, it occurs only once, and everywhere else we find Elohim. This conclusively proves the inadequacy of Mr. Woolley's explanation, and, in conjunction with many similar phenomena, justifies the critics in assigning these names, where they occur in Genesis, to different documents.

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It is further quite inaccurate to describe "the scribes of Israel" as "notorious for an almost idolatrous veneration of their Sacred Writings" (p. 56). Everyone who is acquainted with the history of the text knows that this does not in the least apply to the earlier period. Even a tyro in the study of the textual criticism of the Old Testament is well aware that there are many divergences between the Hebrew text, as represented by our printed Hebrew Bibles, and the Greek Version, which of course also rests upon a Hebrew text; and he is further aware that the Greek is sometimes unquestionably right and that the Hebrew has sometimes been deliberately altered. To take one illustration: in 1 Sam. iii. 13, the sons of Eli "made themselves vile," according to A.V., or "did bring a curse upon themselves," according to R.V. These are both unquestionably wrong, and the Greek is as certainly right, with its "they were cursing God." The Hebrew text underlying the Greek is אֱלֹהִים (*God*), and the present Hebrew text להם (*to them or themselves*) is a deliberate alteration in the interests of reverence.

It will be enough in this connection to quote Robertson Smith, who says:¹ "We can be sure that in these earlier centuries copies of the Bible circulated, and were freely read even by learned men like the author of the *Book of Jubilees*, which had great and notable variations of text, not inferior in extent to those still existing in

¹ *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 62.

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New Testament MSS." It was only "after the fall of the Jewish state, when the Scribes ceased to be an active party in a living commonwealth, and became more and more pure scholars, gathering up and codifying all the fragments of national literature and national life that remained to them," that "we find the text of the Old Testament carefully conformed to a single archetype." When state and temple had vanished and the Old Testament was the only centre left round which the Jews could rally their national life, then, naturally enough, it began to be preserved with meticulous care; but for the earlier period, as the variant versions of the Decalogue or the relation of Chronicles to Kings would be alone sufficient to show, the "almost idolatrous veneration" of the sacred text is a pure fiction.

In discussing my attitude to the extremely important question of the date of Deuteronomy, Mr. Woolley charges me with a serious inconsistency which has no other basis than in his inattention to the precise form of my statement. The relevant paragraph reads thus (p. 71): "The Professor further lays it down that 'there is no doubt' that Joshua to Kings 'received their present form some time after the publication of Deuteronomy in 621 B.C.' What proof does he give for either of these statements? None. In his second article he had more cautiously said, 'It seems reasonable to conclude that it (Deuteronomy) was written some time between 700 and 621'; he now gives 621 *definitely*.

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But so far no reason of any kind has been brought forward for concluding that Deuteronomy was not written by Moses: it would therefore be supererogation to consider either his guess date of 700 to 621 B.C. or his new positive one of 621."

Mr. Woolley has failed to observe that I drew a deliberate distinction between the period in which the book was written and the year in which it was promulgated, a distinction which I had carefully explained in my *Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 55 f. Obviously the "book of the law" which was discovered (2 Kings xxii) must have been lost, and therefore it must have been written a considerable time before it was published, so that the alleged inconsistency vanishes into thin air. When he further says that "so far no reason of any kind has been brought forward for concluding that Deuteronomy was not written by Moses," it is pertinent to point out that this is only Mr. Woolley's opinion. If he chooses to dismiss as inconclusive the proofs in the two necessarily brief paragraphs within which I had to condense the discussion, he will find the matter more fully dealt with in the chapter on Deuteronomy in my *Introduction*, or better still, in the *Introductions* by Driver or G. B. Gray, or much more elaborately in Driver's commentary on Deuteronomy, or König's more recent commentary in the *Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, edited by Sellin. The Old Testament scholarship of the present day is practically unanimous in be-

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lieving that Deuteronomy in its present form cannot be from the hand of Moses: indeed Mr. Woolley admits this himself when on p. 39 he frankly concedes that "the last chapter in Deuteronomy, chapter xxxiv, is a short appendix, which could not well have been penned by Moses, as we cannot expect a man to describe his own death, burial, and the consequent lamentations of his friends!" In other words, in a book whose Mosaic origin our Lord is supposed to have endorsed, Mr. Woolley feels free to reject a chapter which his own good sense sees to be quite inconsistent with such an origin; and that is all that the critics have done, only they have done it on the basis of a much more thorough examination of all the relevant facts—facts beyond as well as within the book in question. It is not for Mr. Woolley to deny to the critics the consistent application of the principle of which he himself makes partial use.

Further, when Mr. Woolley follows up his quotation from me, "there is no doubt that Joshua to Kings received their present form some time after the publication of Deuteronomy in 621 B.C.," with the words, "What proof does he give for either of these statements? None," this is more impressive than just. He has overlooked the fact that the very next two paragraphs were occupied with the proof he desiderates—proof which it is only fair to remember had to be stated with excessive brevity, for it would be unreasonable to expect a writer to condense within an article of 3,000 words a

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discussion of several problems that has extended over more than a hundred years. But Mr. Woolley will find, should he desire it, fuller proof in the relevant chapters of my *Old Testament Introduction*, and a more elaborate statement still in the chapter on "Deuteronomy and its Influence" in my *Messages of the Prophetic and Priestly Historians*. Statements like Mr. Woolley's leave on uninstructed minds the impression that the critics have nothing to offer but dogmatic assertion unsupported by facts: anyone who has more than a superficial acquaintance with the vast literature of criticism knows that the very reverse is the case.

Mr. Woolley repeats a favourite maxim of his school when he says that the pages of Scripture "claim to rest on 'Thus saith the Lord,' not on uncertain traditions" (p. 64). Now this phrase, as everyone knows, occurs with great frequency in the prophetic books, and were Mr. Woolley discussing the nature of the prophetic consciousness, he would be amply justified in emphasizing its importance; but it has no sort of relevance in reference to the historical books. In these books, as Mr. Woolley can see by consulting pp. 83 f. of Fuerst's *Librorum Sacrorum Veteris Testamenti Concordantiæ*, it is a very rare phrase indeed, and it is used there chiefly in utterances of prophets, e.g., Elijah and Elisha—where, by analogy, it is obviously quite in place—and not to guarantee the historicity of an incident. In other words, while the prophets authenticate their

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message by a "Thus saith the LORD," the historians do not similarly authenticate their reports of historic fact. They may make their appeal to the Book of Jashar (Joshua x. 13) or to the Book of the Wars of Jehovah (Num. xxi. 14), but for the most part they make no appeal at all, content simply to state the facts as they know them from observation or report or tradition.

In introducing the discussion of the historical books of the Hagiographa, Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, I had ventured on the innocent remark that they were composed later than the group Joshua, Samuel, Kings. Mr. Woolley puts the word *composed* within inverted commas, as if to speak of sacred books as being "composed" were a sort of sacrilege or blasphemy, and then continues with the amazing comment, "No, they were not 'composed,' they were inspired—directly and Divinely" (p. 66). How anyone who has ever read the Book of Chronicles alongside of Kings with the smallest degree of attention—as can be done with the minimum of trouble in such a book as Girdlestone's *Deuterographs*—and failed to notice that paragraph after paragraph is copied from the earlier book, sometimes word for word, not seldom with significant modifications, passes comprehension; and if this is not composition in the quite literal sense of the word, what would be? But apart from this, why should composition in the more general sense of that word, which was the sense I there intended, be in-

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consistent with inspiration? It would be inconsistent only with a thoroughly wooden or mechanical theory of inspiration, such as has long been abandoned by educated men. And what of the preface to the Gospel of St. Luke? If anything in the world is inspired, that gospel is: I presume that Mr. Woolley believes that, as I do. But Luke, like the accomplished and conscientious historian that he was, shows—as both his Gospel and the Book of Acts bear abundant witness—that before he began to write, he had spared no pains to acquaint himself with all the relevant facts. Surely between composition and inspiration there is no necessary antithesis, except on a wholly untenable view of inspiration.

This view at any rate has the high support of Milton. While he speaks of his poetry as “not to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit Who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His Seraphim, with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases,” he goes on, “To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs.”

Most curious of all is Mr. Woolley's attempt to dispose of the documentary analysis of the Pentateuch—the view, that is, that it is a “composite” book, formed by the “putting together” of various documents or portions, larger or

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smaller, of documents. I had attempted to justify that view by the analogy of the Diatessaron of Tatian, a harmony of the four Gospels which remained the official Gospel of the Syrian Church for about two centuries. On this Mr. Woolley makes the extraordinary comment: "Obviously no Harmony of the Four Gospels, whether the production of the second or the twentieth century, could exist without the Gospels themselves; and we ask, 'What affinity can there be between a Harmony that simply places side by side four existing records, each complete in itself, and mixing up five books, although also complete in themselves, with fraudulent additions concocted centuries later?'" (p. 35). Setting aside the words "fraudulent" and "concocted," which as little represent the spirit of reverent critics as they do Mr. Woolley's, I do not quite understand what he means by "mixing up five books," whether he refers to the five books which constitute our present Pentateuch—though that seems hardly possible—or to the documents out of which the critics believe the Pentateuch was composed—which, however, are four, not five (the Jahwist, the Elohist, Deuteronomy, and the Priestly Code). But that apart, Mr. Woolley has failed to see that the analogy is perfect at every point. Tatian had the four Gospels before him, out of which he made his harmony; the critics believe that the compilers had also their sources before them, out of which they made their harmony, the two sources first named being the first to be blended, and then

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at successive times the two others with them. The analogy extends even to the circumstance that both in the Diatessaron and in the Pentateuch the introductory section comes from the latest document, the Pentateuch beginning with a chapter from the late Priestly document, and the Diatessaron with the first five verses of the Fourth Gospel. When, however, Mr. Woolley describes the Diatessaron as a Harmony that simply places *side by side* four existing records, one is tempted to ask, Has he ever seen the Diatessaron? For in it the existing records are *not* placed side by side, they are "mixed up," to use Mr. Woolley's phrase, exactly as the critics believe them to be in the Pentateuch. Here are two illustrative passages,¹ one dealing with Peter's denial of Jesus, the other with the death of Jesus.

"And when the maid, the portress, saw Simon, she looked at him and saith unto him, Art thou not also one of the disciples of this man, that is to say, of Jesus of Nazareth?¹ And he denied, saying, ¹Jn. 18. 17, Woman, I know him not²; nor do I even ^{Mark 14. 67.} understand what thou sayest³. Now the ²Luke 22. 57. servants and the soldiers rose up, and ³Mark 14. 68 b. kindled a fire in the midst of the court to warm themselves; for it was cold.⁴ ⁴Jn. 18. 18 a. And when they had kindled the fire, they ⁵Luke 22. sat down around it⁵; and Simon also came, ⁵Jn. 18. 55 a. and sat down with them, to warm himself⁶, ⁶Jn. 18. 18 b. that he might see the end of what would ⁷Matt. 26. 58 b. happen."⁷

¹ Taken from pp. 237 and 249 of *The Earliest Life of Christ ever compiled from the Four Gospels, being the Diatessaron of Tatian*, by the Rev. J. Hamlyn Hill, B.D. (T & T. Clark)

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Here the narrative, which is quite coherent, though sometimes a phrase from one Gospel creeps into a sentence from another, draws upon all four Gospels. Similarly in the second passage :

“ After these things, Jesus, knowing that all things were accomplished, and that the scripture might be accomplished, said, I thirst. Now there was set there a vessel full of vinegar¹; and in that hour one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar², and fastening it to a reed, held it near his mouth to give him to drink³. And when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, Everything is finished⁴. But the rest said, Let *him* be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to deliver him⁵. And Jesus said, My Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And Jesus, crying again with a loud voice, said, My Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit⁶; and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.”⁷

¹Jn. 19. 28,
^{29 a.}
²Matt. 27.
^{48 a.}
³Mark 15.
^{36 b, or}
^{Matt. 27.}
^{48 b.}
⁴John 19.
^{30 a.}
⁵Matt. 27.
^{49.}
⁶Luke 23.
^{34 a, 46 a.}
⁷John 19.
^{30b.}

When, therefore, the conservatives maintain that the “snippety” Pentateuch which the critics leave them is an outrage on common sense, the final and sufficient answer is the Diatessaron. Here we have the very phenomenon which they affirm to be absurd and impossible, the only difference being that in the Diatessaron we possess the original sources in our canonical Gospels, while the sources of the Pentateuch have to be discovered by a critical process, which is explained in most modern *Introductions* to the Old Testament, on a greater scale in

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Dr. D. C. Simpson's *Pentateuchal Criticism*, or more fully still in Mr. A. T. Chapman's *Introduction to the Pentateuch* in the "Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges" series.

An exhaustive reply to Mr. Woolley would have involved the discussion of many minor points of detail, for which this is not the place: the larger matters on which I have concentrated have been selected because they are typical of the objections made to modern criticism and characteristic of the conservative defence.

W. H. FITCHETT

Let us now turn to Dr. W. H. Fitchett and his book, *Where the Higher Criticism Fails*. Here again we must select. With Dr. Fitchett, as with Professor T. J. Smith, we find assumptions such as they would promptly disallow if they were made by the critical school. We are told, e.g. (p. 75) that "when Abraham became what may be called the spiritual head of the race, these records of its early religious training would come into his hands, and be preserved with care; Moses would take them as a sacred trust, adding to them the larger knowledge God had given to him, and arrange them in chronological order, employing, no doubt, scribes and copyists." All this of course is pure assumption: if we felt free to adopt the impressive language of Mr. Woolley, we might say, "What proof does he give for any of these statements? None." On p. 153, speaking of Jesus, he makes the far-

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reaching statement that His divine office “*began with assuredly the full measure of divine knowledge and power.*” This, too, is a piece of sheer dogmatism, and the italics into which he throws the words do not add to the certainty of their truth. They may indeed be true; but Bishop Gore, whose orthodoxy few would impeach, and who could modestly claim to have devoted at least as much attention to the question of Christology as Dr. Fitchett, would entirely disagree. In his *Doctrine of the Infallible Book* (p. 25), as elsewhere, he maintains that “to accept the conditions of existing knowledge, as to accept the current language of His time and nation, was involved in the Incarnation.” Again, if we may judge by a chance phrase, Dr. Fitchett’s philosophy seems as curious as his Christology is dogmatic. When he speaks of the “*sinless manner of Christ’s birth*” (p. 128) are we to infer that the manner of normal birth is sinful? And if so, what an indictment against the order of nature established by God Himself!

Dr. Fitchett appears to believe in the cogency of argument by ridicule, a choice specimen of which occurs in his discussion of the documentary analysis of the Pentateuch. He tells us on p. 79 that “the list of editors and redactors, etc.—all of them literary ghosts—is so long and complex that the mere catalogue of symbols—alphabetical or algebraical—to represent them stretches through pages.” This is the grossest of exaggerations: the customary symbols of Pentateuchal criticism could be tabulated in a single

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line, and those that vitally matter in much less. Then he goes on, "Now what faintest authority is there for cutting up the plainest sentences in the Bible in this fashion? It is not scholarship, it is not sane criticism, it is not common sense"—the implication being that the men who are devoting their lives to the study of the Bible are endowed with less than ordinary sanity. Were this so, there would remain the question whether it is the unbalanced people who take to Biblical study, or whether Biblical study has the effect of unbalancing them. Happily it is not necessary to choose between two such lamentable alternatives. So far as it is true that seemingly plain sentences of the Bible are "cut up," to say nothing of the analogy of the Diatessaron, the authority for which Dr. Fitchett asks is simply the authority of facts, which he will find set forth in any of the books mentioned on p. 128, or in any critical commentary: why does he not discuss them? The critical contention is airily dismissed, and not grappled with at all. Two pages after the "editors, redactors, etc.," have been summarily disposed of, we come across a possible clue to the explanation—Professor Welch's name is twice spelt with an *s*. If Dr. Fitchett's powers of observation do not carry him the length of copying correctly an important word consisting of only five letters, he does not seem exactly qualified for the delicate task of literary criticism, where accurate observation is of the first importance.

Dr. Fitchett's caricature of the literary process

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to which the existing form of the Pentateuch is due may perhaps be excused in view of the grotesque exaggerations which were perpetrated in the sober pages of the *Expositor*¹ by the Rev. W. Henderson Begg, B.D., who commits himself to the statement that "an incredible number of redactors are thus discovered to have had a hand in writing one psalm, and hosts of imaginary persons known as R¹, ², ³, who never existed except in the fog of a Teutonic brain, are invoked to account for one short prophecy." Hosts! This may be very impressive, but it is not true. I quote it, however, partly because it is characteristic of another feature of the conservative defence, namely, its unworthy depreciation of the work of German scholars. Statements such as that just quoted would evoke suspicion in any unprejudiced mind, however uninformed—inspired as they are by the demon of nationalism, which has wrought such havoc in the political sphere, and which Christian men are bending their energies to exorcise. But everyone who has any real acquaintance with the history of theology or criticism knows that the world of scholarship is immensely indebted to the acute and patient toil of Germany, and glib depreciation of it carries no conviction to anyone who knows the facts. This weapon, however, is one which Dr. Fitchett does not scorn to employ. "The plain man," he tells us, "does not share the alarms of those nervous souls who think that the Christian faith is to be destroyed by a little ink

¹ August, 1923 : p. 96.

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from a German inkpot" (p. 184). In the business alike of defence and attack, clever flippancies carry us nowhere. Truth would be easily recognized and error detected if we had nothing to consider but the nationality of the writer. But the search for truth is not quite so simple.

And in that search the capacity to observe and to think is at least as important as the capacity to smile. One might be inclined to doubt this, judging from Dr. Fitchett's repeated insistence on this latter faculty as indispensable to the complete equipment of the Biblical critic. Significantly enough he ends his book with the word "smile." In the Higher Criticism, he tells us, the catalogue "of things forgotten, of truths seen askew, or out of focus, or even in contradiction to the plain meaning of the Bible, is such that the common sense of the plain man can judge of them with confidence, and—in some case¹ at least—can dismiss them with a smile." In spite of the prudent qualification of the last clause but one, Dr. Fitchett has to be reminded of the obvious truth that in a scientific discussion, a smile is hardly an adequate substitute for an argument, it is the last refuge of the superficial and the indolent. The smile with which many a discovery has been greeted by the powers that be did not invalidate the discovery. Certain aspects of Principal Griffith-Jones's Christology, which do not commend themselves to Dr. Fitchett, "need no other

¹ Is cases intended?

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refutation than a smile"—simple refutation indeed!—"they are incredible from pure foolishness" (p. 90); and this though he had earlier allowed that Dr. Griffith-Jones was not only a sincere Christian and a scholar, but a "thinker" (p. 39). "The sense of humour," we are told on p. 86, "has its own sudden and instinctive logic against which there is no appeal"—a truly comfortable doctrine to those whose sense of humour is keener than their appetite for hard intellectual work. In view of this exaltation of humour as the final court of appeal, it is with amazement that we find Dr. Fitchett in the very same sentence quoting with appreciation Butler's famous description of reason as "the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning everything, even religion itself"—a description which should be laid to heart by those who regard humour as furnishing a short cut to the solution of intricate problems, and who believe, as Dr. Fitchett naïvely puts it, that "humour in this business is sometimes more effective than logic" (p. 83). "It is natural," we are told on p. 91, "to suppose that Christ knew who the writers" of the Old Testament "were"—natural, no doubt, to Dr. Fitchett, but just as unnatural to Bishop Gore and many others who by earnest study and strenuous thought have won at least an equal right to their contrary opinion; "and as the writings in dispute were the very books which foretold His coming, and were written to prepare the way for that coming, the contention, in which practically all the Higher Critics join,

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lends itself to humorous treatment at many points." In other words, the critics, "practically all" of them, are not to be tried and condemned or acquitted, they are to be literally laughed out of court—which hardly appeals to one's sense of justice or even intellectual decency. Humour has its place, and the critics, as a body, are no more deficient in that sense than any other body of men—indeed Dr. Fitchett concedes as much when he limits this "melancholy want of the sense of humour" to "*many* at least of the critics"—but has he ever read Duhm? Its place, however, is not to decide by the rather too simple device of a "smile" questions which every student who has gone an inch below the surface knows can only be settled, if settled at all, by the arbitrament of reason, "the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning" anything.

So much for the spirit of Dr. Fitchett's criticism. His treatment of detail is often equally unsatisfactory. The general thesis of his chapter on "The Bible as a Living Book" is that many critics—he is careful to add "*many*"—"in their concentration on the literary side of the Bible, forget" that "the question at issue, first and last, is one of spiritual values," and in developing this thesis he offers a rough estimate of the spiritual value of the twenty-third psalm. Then he goes on to say that when all the questions raised by the literary critic about its authorship, its poetry, etc., have been answered, "the true value of the psalm has

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not been touched." But every Biblical critic who understands his business would unhesitatingly admit that. Kautzsch has said of this very psalm among others—and no one will accuse that scholar of being indifferent to critical interests—"How idle the dispute about the inscriptions is, must be especially clear to one who uses the psalms for the purpose for which they were collected! What in all the world has the inexhaustible power of songs like Psalms 23, 90, 103, 121, 127, and many others to do with the question whether some post-exilic redactor did or did not err in his ascription of them to David or Moses or Solomon?"¹ Dr. Fitchett himself could hardly have put this more forcibly. Elsewhere² the same scholar insists upon the principle that "Biblical criticism is never an end in itself, but always only a means to an end"—the proximate end being the understanding either of the contents of Scripture in detail, or of the history of revelation as a whole, and the ultimate end, we may add, being the transformation of character by this better apprehension of the ways and will of God; and he points out³ that a pupil who is properly taught will be led to recognize clearly from the beginning "how insignificant are the questions of documentary analysis and the outer clothing of the narratives in comparison with the question of their religious content."

¹ *Alttestamentliches Schrifttum*, p. 128.

² *Bibelwissenschaft und Religionsunterricht*, p. 24.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 26.

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Dr. Fitchett is quite mistaken if he supposes that the average Biblical critic of to-day "forgets the spiritual values" of the Book which it is his business to interpret: he would be a poor critic indeed if he ignored the factor which, immeasurably more than any other, has lifted the Bible to its lonely eminence among the literatures of the world. It is matter of common knowledge that many, if not most, of the professional teachers of the Bible, at any rate in Scotland, who are convinced believers not only in the right, but in the duty of literary criticism, are to be found practically every Sunday in the pulpits of the land, where they "concentrate" upon the spiritual value of the Bible with a sincerity and an earnestness which even Dr. Fitchett could not impeach. The truth is that he fails to distinguish properly between the work which a Biblical scholar may do as a literary critic and the work which *the same scholar* may do as an interpreter of spiritual values, whether in the capacity of exegete or preacher. In a theological college the wise teacher of students preparing for the ministry will do both; but he may elect at other times to concentrate on the one task or the other. Robertson Smith's *Old Testament in the Jewish Church* has been of epoch-making importance in the English-speaking world for the "critical" appreciation of the Old Testament, but no one who has read the first chapter of that book can accuse him of ignoring "spiritual values." When Driver wrote his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, his aim was not primarily the spiritual

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edification of his readers, but to "assist them to estimate more truly some of the problems which that literature presents;" but this same Driver has also given us a volume of *Sermons on the Old Testament*, and another on *The Ideals of the Prophets*. Skinner wrote his severely critical volume on *The Divine Names in Genesis* to combat the position taken up by Dahse on the literary problems of the Hexateuch, but this same Skinner has also given us an admirable exposition, emphasizing spiritual values, of the Book of Ezekiel. C. F. Burney wrote a very elaborate commentary of 528 closely printed pages on the Book of Judges,¹ but he also wrote a volume on *The Gospel in the Old Testament*. Professor W. G. Jordan wrote his *Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought* in answer to recent contentions of the conservative school; but everyone who is acquainted with his *Prophetic Ideas and Ideals*, or *Religion in Song*, or *The Song and the Soil*, or *Ancient Hebrew Stories and their Modern Interpretation*, knows that these books carry their readers into the heart of Old Testament religion. Principal Sir George Adam Smith, who subjected the Book of Deuteronomy, in his commentary, to a very searching analysis, has, as every preacher

¹ It is worth noting that Burney devotes a section of his Introduction to "The Permanent Religious Value of Judges," in which he points out that "while there is nothing in Judges which makes a direct spiritual appeal to men's consciences at the present day at all comparable to that which is made by the teaching of the later Prophets, the fact must not be overlooked that the book is placed in the Hebrew Canon among "the Former Prophets," and occupies this position because it is history written with a purpose, and that purpose a religious one"—a thesis which he goes on to develop. (p. cxxi.)

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gratefully acknowledges, re-opened the ancient wells of prophetic inspiration by his volumes on Isaiah and the Minor Prophets; the very title of his Yale Lectures, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, is enough to show that criticism and edification are not only compatible, but correlate. And so with New Testament scholars. The increasing freedom of A. B. Bruce's critical attitude to that literature is familiar to the readers of his many books and articles, yet one of his books was *The Chief End of Revelation*. But it would be as idle as it would be easy to amplify this list, the facts speak for themselves; and in view of them it is preposterous to maintain that the average British Biblical critic "forgets spiritual values." He may indeed "concentrate on the literary side of the Bible," when that is what he sets out to do, but the facts adduced show that he does very much more than that.

Even with regard to German critics, the charge of "forgetting spiritual values" is by no means widely justified. True, their critics are not so often preachers as ours, and even their exegetical work is not so frequently directed to spiritual edification; but one of the aims which govern the *Kommentar zum Alten Testament* which Sellin is editing is just to emphasize the religious content and values of its various books. But to return to the twenty-third psalm. The psalm, says Dr. Fitchett, "has an enduring spiritual value and is, for all time, a promise for every other human soul under the same conditions. And the one question worth asking about the

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psalm is: Does that hidden and divine promise in it hold good? Is its story repeated and verified in human experience without failure from generation to generation? Does it still hold good to-day? *These are questions which, strange to say, no Higher Critic ever asks*" (pp. 69 f.: italics ours). Surely the obvious retort is that these are questions with which *the literary critic, as such*, has nothing to do: they fall within the domain of the preacher. But we trust Dr. Fitchett does not mean to be taken seriously when he says that no higher critic *ever* asks these questions. He would ask them and answer them, as a preacher; he would even trench upon them as an exegete. Kittel, in his fine commentary on the Psalter in Sellin's series, leads us in a few words into the religious heart of the psalm; so does Gunkel in his *Ausgewählte Psalmen*; and above all, Sir George Adam Smith. Everyone who has read the chapter on "God our Shepherd" in his *Four Psalms* and watched the beauty and the power with which he sets forth how, in Dr. Fitchett's words, "the hidden and divine promise in it holds good," must categorically repudiate the statement that no higher critic *ever* asks these questions. And if the issue is evaded by the contention that Sir George speaks thus as a *preacher*, it is fair to reply that he spoke on the psalm to his students in precisely the same spirit as a *teacher*, after dealing with the textual and literary problems which it raised.

Altogether inexplicable are Dr. Fitchett's comments on the critical attitude to three of the

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most remarkable books in the Old Testament. "Modern criticism," he tells us, "is apt to dismiss from consideration the books which bear the names of Ruth, and Esther, and Jonah" (p. 96); and two pages further on we are informed that "some critics would thrust" these books "out of the Bible on the ground of their irrelevance." It is a pity he omitted to say who these critics are. So far are the critics from "dismissing" these or any other such significant religious documents of the ancient East "from consideration," that they would be only too glad if such documents were much more numerous, and they would accord the heartiest welcome to new discoveries, as in fact they did to the Elephantine papyri. But if the charge is the more serious one that they would wish to thrust these books out of the Bible, it may interest Dr. Fitchett to know that no less a champion of evangelical faith than Luther held the opinion that the Book of Esther ought to have been excluded from the Canon: "I am so opposed," he said, "to this book (i.e., the Second Book of Maccabees) and *Esther*, that I wish they did not exist, for they Judaize too much and contain many heathenish improprieties." Such modern critics, if any such there be, as would exclude Esther from the Canon, would at any rate find themselves in good company. Dr. Fitchett succeeds in defending it only by ignoring those features of it which so grievously offend the Christian conscience. He tells us that it "seems to have no direct relation to the spiritual purposes for which

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the Jewish race was being trained ;" the truth is that it is in direct opposition to those purposes, as interpreted by the master-minds of that race, e.g., the writer of Isaiah xl-lv, who regards the supreme purpose of that race as the conversion of the alien world, whereas this book calmly describes the day following the destruction of 75,000 of the enemies of the Jews as "a day of feasting and gladness" (ix. 16 f.). This in the circumstances may be very intelligible, but it shows us the Jew at his worst rather than at his best. When we are told that "the book is an Eastern drama in which we see evil and good struggling together" (p. 97), it is only fair to point out that the evil is not all on one side. If Haman's is "a nature given to evil," the vindictiveness of Esther is anything but admirable. We can all admire the high courage of her "If I perish, I perish," but what sensitive conscience can help shuddering at Esther's request for a second butchery (ix. 13), which as Professor L. B. Paton says in his commentary (p. 287), "was in no sense an act of self-defence, since the power of the enemies of the Jews had already been broken by the events of the thirteenth day of Adar. This shows a malignant spirit of revenge more akin to the teaching of the Talmud than to the teaching of the Old Testament." Further, "the vengeance of Esther pursues the sons of Haman even after they are dead. We must suppose that their bodies are suspended with their father's (vii. 10, viii. 7), in order to complete the degradation of the house

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of Haman and to serve as an additional warning to the enemies of the Jews."

It is a joy to turn from these scenes of blood and revenge to the large and—if the anachronism may be pardoned—the Christian charity that glows in the Books of Jonah and Ruth—Jonah, with its incomparable presentation of a love of God which stretches across the world to embrace even the enemy alien who again and again had humbled Israel to the dust, a love which reaches down even to the animal creation (iv. 11); and Ruth, with its gracious plea for the alien woman, which was intended to convince the stern and narrow legalists of the time that a Moabitess might be an Israelite indeed and that one who could whole-heartedly say, "Thy God (i.e., Jehovah) shall be my God," was worthy of a royal welcome into the commonwealth of Israel. So far are the critics from dismissing these two beautiful books from consideration that they regard them as among the precious memorials of ancient Israel, precious not only for their singular literary charm but far more, especially Jonah, for their exhibition of the

"wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea."

We have already quoted Cornill's moving tribute to the Book of Jonah.¹ So far are Old Testament scholars from desiring to thrust Jonah out of the Bible that they would joyfully subscribe to the

¹ P. III.

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verdict of Professor Peake that the author of that book is "perhaps, next to Jeremiah, the greatest of the Hebrew Prophets,"¹ and that it is one of the "most marvellous monuments of the religious genius of Israel."² In similar words Kautzsch³ describes the Book of Ruth as "a memorial that does honour to the religion which had the capacity to produce such fruits in true Israelites," and "a remarkable witness to what, in spite of all Leviticalism, living religion meant in the time of Ezra." The generous temper of these two books is the direct contrary of that of the Book of Esther, which is nationalistic to the core. So when Dr. Fitchett complains that to much modern criticism Ruth and Jonah "seem irrelevant" and that "the universal note" in the Old Testament has been "too long and often unrecognized," we are bound to reply that scholar after scholar has recognized that note in Ruth and Jonah and elsewhere as amply as he, and that these books, far from seeming irrelevant, are welcomed as illuminating testimonies to the deeper and better mind of Israel, and as adumbrations of the love which God was later to manifest in all its fulness in the person of His Son. It is impossible to understand how, with any sort of propriety, Dr. Fitchett can write: "The Book of Jonah, if we read it through the spectacles of the Higher Critics, is made incredible and turned into a mere folk-story of a

¹ *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, p. 63.

² *Op. cit.* p. 117.

³ *Alttestamentliches Schrifttum*, p. 116.

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low type by the incident of Jonah and the whale." Why, this is precisely the charge which the critics could with entire justice bring against the literalists of the conservative school. It is they who have made the story incredible by sinning, as Principal Smith has said,¹ "not only against the common sense which God has given us, but against the simple and obvious intention of the author." "How long, O Lord, must Thy poetry suffer from those who can only treat it as prose? On whatever side they stand, sceptical or orthodox, they are equally pedants, quenchers of the spiritual, creators of unbelief."²

We do not forget that Dr. Fitchett allows that the critics are not all alike. "Higher Criticism," it appears, "is a perfectly legitimate branch of Bible study" (p. 198). "There is much in the Higher Criticism that is true, and that is doing real service for truth" (p. 181)—that is gratifying—though the degrees of sanity among its representatives seem to vary. Among "the saner critics of to-day" (p. 34), four of whom have the honour of special mention, appears Professor Peake: this distinction, however, does not prevent Dr. Fitchett from describing the valuable one-volume Commentary on the Bible which he edited as an attempt to "deodorize" the methods and results of the extreme critics "sufficiently to make them acceptable to the general Christian palate" (p. 82)—a description whose good taste is as questionable as its mixed

¹ *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. ii, p. 526.

² *Op. cit.* 533.

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metaphor. This seemingly cordial approval of criticism, however, ceases the moment its methods or conclusions do not commend themselves to Dr. Fitchett, and then begins argument by ridicule or misrepresentation. When he asserts, e.g., that the method employed in proof of the composite authorship of the Pentateuch "discovers and solemnly labels *a hundred* 'editors,' 'redactors' and 'compilers'" (p. 25), the well-informed reader is unperturbed: he first takes note of the gross exaggeration which is intended to cast ridicule on the documentary analysis, and then he remembers with quiet satisfaction that this method was defended by so careful, conservative and Christian a scholar as Driver. Dr. Fitchett admits that perhaps there is no other question "about the results of which the critics are so nearly unanimous" (p. 76). Considering the comparative sanity, already acknowledged, of at least some of the critics, the sentence that follows is passing strange—"and yet, tried by plain common sense, the methods adopted are an offence to reason." They can be no greater an offence to reason than Dr. Fitchett's persistent refusal to deal with the facts brought forward by the critics in support of the analysis is an offence to justice.

But then we are told that the reader "can judge, by only looking at the results" (p. 78). Results, however, can only be appreciated by those who have taken the trouble to examine the processes by which they are reached; and we should like to know whether even the literary experience of

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Dr. Fitchett, to say nothing of the "plain common sense" to which he has appealed, would enable him to judge the result which we know as the Diatessaron by "only looking" at it, and to come to a correct conclusion about it. It is compiled, as we know, from the four Gospels: on Dr. Fitchett's facile principles, we should be obliged roundly to deny this as "an offence to reason." He might be inclined to reconsider, perhaps even to modify these principles somewhat, if he took account of the "striking similarity" between the methods employed by Hebrew and Arabic historians, to which Mr. A. A. Bevan calls attention in his essay on "Historical Methods in the Old Testament" in the *Cambridge Biblical Essays*. The passage is so complete a refutation of Dr. Fitchett's superficial and uninformed criticisms that it deserves to be quoted in full. "When we consider," says Mr. Bevan (p. 19), "that our information respecting the literary history of the Arabs is vastly superior, both in abundance and accuracy, to the information which we possess concerning the literary history of the ancient Hebrews, it will appear evident that for the elucidation of the historical portions of the Old Testament the comparative study of the two literatures is of inestimable value. But apart from this positive gain the comparison is especially to be recommended as serving to put us on our guard against the popular fallacy which consists in judging the writers of the Old Testament by modern European standards, in assuming, for

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instance, that a narrative which seems at first sight to be continuous must necessarily emanate from one author and be of uniform authority throughout. Such delusions are not dispelled by abstract reasoning; they can be dispelled only by the patient investigation of facts."

Further, in direct opposition to Dr. Fitchett's statement that "many of the Higher Critics believe that the theory which has been applied to the documents of the Pentateuch has a sort of mathematical certainty" (p. 83) is Mr. Bevan's presentation, in the same essay, of the real facts. "That the analysis cannot *always* be effected, that in spite of our utmost efforts much remains doubtful or altogether obscure is acknowledged by critics of every school" (p. 11). As this fact is often ignored or expressly denied by popular writers, he quotes a passage from Wellhausen's *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, in which that scholar admits that he is "far from imagining that he has everywhere reached assured goals," and that what he considers is further discussion. This modest disclaimer, of which I gave many illustrations in my *Old Testament Criticism and the Christian Church* (pp. 65-68), could be abundantly illustrated by the more recent literature of Old Testament criticism. The critics are too conscious of the difficulties to claim the infallibility which is thrust upon them.

One final point. In deploring the "tragical blindness to the great things in the Bible" often manifested by the Higher Criticism, Dr. Fitchett does not hesitate to say that Deuteronomy

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"emerges" from the critical process "robbed of spiritual value" (p. 49)—and this, presumably, because the critics, or most of them, assign it, after the most minute investigation and for reasons which seem to them incontrovertible, to the seventh century B.C. rather than to the hand of Moses. Now such a description is nothing less than a sheer travesty of the facts. We shall name only five English-speaking scholars all of whom reject the Mosaic authorship, but each of whom vies with the other in extolling its spiritual value. Dr. Harper has expounded that value in a volume of *The Expositor's Bible*, running to nearly 500 pages. Professor W. G. Jordan, in his commentary on Deuteronomy in *The Bible for Home and School*, has written a chapter on "Its Religious Significance and Permanent Influence." Dr. A. H. McNeile has devoted a volume to *Deuteronomy: its Place in Revelation*, in which he characterizes that book as "one of the choicest products of Israel's prophetic genius, the inspired work of an unknown servant of God." Dr. Driver in his *Commentary* writes on "The Scope and Character of Deuteronomy: its dominant Ideas," with a glow unusual to him, which reaches its climax in the well-known sentence quoted below.¹

¹ "Nowhere else in the Old Testament do we breathe such an atmosphere of generous devotion to God, and of large-hearted benevolence towards man; nowhere else are duties and motives set forth with greater depth and tenderness of feeling, or with more winning and persuasive eloquence; and nowhere else is it shown with the same fulness of detail how high and noble principles may be applied so as to elevate and refine the entire life of the community." (p.xxv).

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Sir George Adam Smith in his *Commentary* on Deuteronomy has dealt with its "distinctive spirituality" in the chapter on "Standpoint, Doctrine and Spirit," and probably the most beautiful and eloquent tribute to its moral and religious power that the Book has ever received is to be found in the eighth chapter of the second volume of his *Jerusalem*. Any one of these volumes is the adequate refutation of Dr. Fitchett's charge. And if he were to reject this conclusion on the ground that the spiritual value of Deuteronomy vanishes if its Mosaic authorship be denied, he would be guilty of the double error of confusing the authority of a book with its authorship, and of applying modern standards to ancient literary practice. Driver and others have shown that in spite of its later date the book is in a real sense Mosaic. Dr. Cobern has reminded us of an analogy which explains how "the original legislator would naturally impress his name upon the whole body of laws. Blackstone's and Kent's 'Commentaries' and Story's 'Equity Jurisprudence' must always go by these great names, though much new matter has already been added to them."¹ Similarly, Webster's Dictionary, which first appeared nearly a hundred years ago (in 1828), is still known by his name, though it has been revised and supplemented again and again; and the new edition of Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, revised and augmented throughout, under the editorship of Dr.

¹ *Biblical World*, August, 1901, pp. 108 f.

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Henry Stuart Jones, will no doubt be known by the names of its original compilers.

The title of Dr. Fitchett's book is *Where the Higher Criticism Fails*, and his book certainly proves very conclusively that that criticism fails, as it is bound to fail, where it has never had a chance, where it has not been honestly met by what Mr. Bevan calls "the patient investigation of facts," and where its methods and conclusions are calmly "dismissed with a gesture" (p. 34), or "a smile" (p. 198).

MIRACLE AND THE SUPERNATURAL.

Much more vital to the Christian faith than the literary criticism on which the conservatives are wont to pour unmerited contempt is the whole question of the supernatural. Here again, however, so far at least as most English and even much German criticism is concerned, the conservative attack rests partly on misunderstanding, partly on misrepresentation. When it is insinuated, as by Professor T. Jollie Smith,¹ that "most of the criticism of the critics" involves a denial of the supernatural, it would be the simplest matter in the world for one who knows the literature of criticism to quote scholar after scholar who has explicitly confessed his faith in the supernatural. Sir George Adam Smith, who devoted a chapter (iv) of his Yale Lectures to "The Proof of a Divine Revelation in the Old

¹ *Studies in Criticism and Revelation*, pp. 79 f.

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Testament," reminds us¹ that "the late Professor Robertson Smith affirmed again and again his belief in the Divine Origin of the Old Testament, and in the last of his Burnett Lectures proved 'the uniqueness of Hebrew prophecy and the impossibility of accounting for it by natural or historical reasons.'" He further quotes Professor Budde as confessing that his belief in "a genuine revelation of God in the Old Testament remains rock-fast." Similarly Professor Sanday: "My experience is that criticism leads straight up to the supernatural and not away from it." Similarly Professor Erik Stave of Upsala: "Neither in regard to its political outlines, nor in regard to its religious development, is the history of Israel a result of mere human forces, or of the free play of accident."² We must surely do these scholars the honour of believing that they mean what they say.

The conservatives wrongly assume, on the one hand, that the acceptance of literary criticism and its results, of which most of them disapprove, inevitably carries with it a disbelief in the supernatural, and, on the other, that doubt as to the miraculous nature of certain recorded incidents equally involves this disbelief. These assumptions are both false. With regard to the first, one may accept the general methods and conclusions of Wellhausen and Kuenen, in so far as they are purely literary, without sharing their

¹ P. 115.

² *Der Einfluss der Bibelkritik auf das christliche Glaubensleben*
p. 16.

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attitude to the supernatural. Here, e.g., is the testimony of Professor Meinhold, "Well I know what separates me from Wellhausen, viz., the accentuation of the supernatural factor in the history of Israel and its prophetism. That is assuredly not a subordinate point. Yet," he goes on warmly, "one may be an opponent of Wellhausen's and at the same time be far enough from Christianity. One may be an adherent of his, and yet with glad heart confess his allegiance to the religion of revelation. Many of my colleagues do this in common with myself. We accuse anyone of falsehood who maintains the contrary of us."¹ The distinction on which Meinhold here so energetically insists has been well put by Loisy in his *Études Bibliques* (p. 89): "It is necessary to distinguish between the naturalistic interpretation which Kuenen and Wellhausen have given to the history of Israel, and that history as it manifests itself to the unprejudiced observer who accepts, in the matter of purely literary criticism, the general conclusions of these scholars."

The second false assumption is that doubt as to the miraculous nature of specific incidents necessarily carries with it disbelief in the supernatural. The argument for the power and presence of God in history has been too readily staked upon the credibility of "miraculous" events. It is a perilous argument. What if the time should come when, after "patient investigation of the facts" or through some

¹ *Jesus und das Alte Testament*, p. xviii.

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subtle change of one's mental outlook, these events, or the records of them, begin to be conscientiously doubted, or even rejected? Is faith in God then to be abandoned? If He is to be found chiefly in the gaps, we are in danger of losing sight of Him elsewhere, in the even flow of nature and the long march of history. As Dean Inge has said, "Those who take refuge in gaps find themselves in a tight place when the gaps begin to close."¹ The God we need is a God who is not only over all, but through all and in all. What Professor J. Y. Simpson says of the wonder of the world as a whole is equally true of the wonder of the Bible and of the history behind it, that "as the advance of knowledge opens men's minds, they come to realize that the whole is the real miracle, and look for miracle and find it in the whole even more than in the detail."²

"Even in the detail." For the detail, too, may be miraculous. But the detail must be "patiently investigated," each case on its own merits, and also the sense which, in view of the results of our investigation and of all the other evidence at our disposal, has to be attached to the word "miraculous." In an article which appeared in *The Hibbert Journal* for July, 1923, which has the honour to be specially mentioned by Professor T. Jollie Smith³ as "illustrating the 'destructive' school," I fully discussed the

¹ *Science, Religion and Reality*, p. 366.

² *The Spiritual Interpretation of Nature* (Revised Edition),

p. 303.

³ *Studies in Criticism and Revelation*, p. 188.

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question of "Miracle in the Old Testament" and pointed out that while the presence of the supernatural "*may* still be recognized even in individual incidents, it *must* be recognized in the uniqueness of the history, the religion, and the great personalities of Israel" (p. 752). The crossing of the Red Sea, e.g., happening just when and where it did—made possible, as the earliest form of the narrative shows (Ex. xiv. 21), by the so-called "natural" action of an east wind upon the shallow water—is "a miracle, no less mysterious and essentially much more impressive, than walls of water," which, after all, are only attested by the latest documentary source (xiv. 22).¹ But the case for the supernatural does not depend on isolated incidents like these: the whole history of Israel is translucent with its presence. And many a critical scholar could with a good conscience and out of a full heart echo the words of the French scholar, Père Lagrange: "I do not hesitate to say that historical study will more and more bring into the light the supernatural action of God."

Obviously the record of an incident, which we are asked to regard as miraculous in the narrower and common acceptation of that word, must be invited to stand certain tests: for much will depend on the capacity of the observer, on the sources of information accessible to the narrator,

¹ Incidentally this reveals one of the gains of the documentary analysis. The earlier sources describe the incident in ways that are thoroughly intelligible; it is in the source centuries removed from the incident that the perplexing traits appear.

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and—if, as is usual, the record is centuries later than the incident—on the reliability of tradition. Dogmatism is no substitute, here or anywhere else, for investigation. The fact that the miracle is recorded in a sacred book does not exempt it from these tests: it is all the more important that it should face them and be able to survive them, considering the importance of the issues at stake. Prof. T. J. Smith¹ sums up “the characteristics of a miracle” thus: it is unique, inexplicable, incredible, “seems to be an intrusion from another sphere than ours,” and “it seems to have a meaning for us; it is a message from one soul to another.” After these general statements, one would have welcomed a specific discussion of some Biblical miracles, but we are put off with a sentence about miracles of healing, a few analogies from human experience, and the placid assurance that while miracles “will always remain incredible to the mass of men . . . the more men think over them, the more willingly they can accept them.” Is not the very reverse of this the truth? Matthew Arnold, in his discussions of religion, said some shallow things, but surely he was right, in the main, when he said that “it is almost impossible to exaggerate the proneness of the human mind to take miracles as evidence, and to seek for miracles as evidence,”² but that “as its experience widens, it gets acquainted with the natural history of miracles, it sees how they arise, and it slowly but inevitably

¹ *Studies*, p. 131.

² *Literature and Dogma*, ch. v. 3.

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puts them aside.”¹ It is not the uneducated man, but the educated man, whom they trouble. It is therefore the more to be regretted that Professor Smith did not address himself somewhat more resolutely to the problem, and that all he has to say about so great a marvel as Elisha’s floating iron (2 Kings vi. 6) is this: “Let us assume that cases of telergy have been established by competent observers. Is that not somewhat similar to the story of Elisha making the axe-head swim?”² Perhaps it is; but he might have carried us a little further into the problem, if it had occurred to him to consider this story in relation to the curious cycle of which it forms a part.

In view of the following confession of Kuenen, the conservatives would do well, in their defence of the miraculous, to replace “abstract reasoning by the patient investigation of facts.” This is what he says: “Without for a moment concealing my own conviction that there is not one single miracle on record which we can accept as a fact, *I would nevertheless place in the forefront of historical criticism the principle that miracles are possible.* To this principle I have never been consciously untrue, while pursuing the very path which has led me to the conviction I have just avowed.”³ He goes on to say that he therefore does not reject a miraculous narrative on *a priori* grounds or without discussion, but that

¹ *God and the Bible*, ch. i. 2.

² *Studies*, p. 134.

³ Budde’s translation from the Dutch of Kuenen’s *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, p. 21.

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he examines its credibility with all earnestness. The ring of sincerity in this profession deserves from conservative defenders of the faith a response which it seldom receives—a response which would take the form of an equally searching examination of the narratives in question. We certainly get nothing of this kind from Professor Smith. He simply enumerates the Biblical miracles “which are most rejected”—the four from the Old Testament being “(1) the story of the sun and the moon standing still, (2) the story of Balaam’s ass, (3) the story of Jonah, (4) the story of the children in the fiery furnace”—and contents himself with generalities drawn from analogy or with the observation that there are certain periods in history characterized by manifestations of miraculous power. If by the “three periods of the outburst of miracle in the 2,000 years covered by Scripture history” Professor Smith is thinking of the Exodus, the time of Elijah, and the time of our Lord, none of the four Old Testament miracles he mentions falls within any of these periods.

Jonah we have already dealt with, and have shown how much that story stands to lose by Professor Smith’s interpretation of it. To what has already been said¹ about the Book of Daniel as presenting to the eye of criticism a view of history charged with insight and hope, need only be added that the narratives of that book carried successfully home to the hearts of its tormented

¹ P. 110.

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contemporaries the assurance that God would be with them in the flames of persecution kindled by Antiochus and would bring to triumph, as He did, the cause for which they stood. On that book, so interpreted, the modern man may still kindle his faith and hope and courage.

Let us now turn to "the story of the sun and the moon standing still" and "the story of Balaam's ass." Professor Smith, who numbers these among the "most rejected" stories of miracle, does not precisely tell us whether he himself accepts them or not, though in the context we presume he does, difficult as it may be to understand how a man who shares the mental outlook of the twentieth century A.D. can accept the literal truth of either. Perhaps of the two miracles the former would be the more stupendous. But criticism explains it in a way which prevents the story from being what Dr. Fitchett would call "an offence to reason," by calling attention to the fact that the words which describe it are excerpted from the Book of Jashar (Joshua x. 12 f.), which was a book of poetry (2 Sam. i. 18-27). Joshua's apostrophe to the sun and the moon is conceived in a fine imaginative vein; and he who wantonly turns the imaginations of poetry into the literalisms of prose, if he is not guilty of a literary crime, at any rate betrays an incapacity which for ever disqualifies him from the delicate task of poetic interpretation.

With the speaking ass of Balaam might be coupled the speaking serpent of the garden of Eden. It is of profound interest that both these

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stories occur in the same documentary source of the Pentateuch, and that the oldest. Speaking animals hardly belong to the world of sober history; and when Professor Smith points to the analogy of the Elberfeld horses, it seems in order to remind him that these horses, clever as they were, are not reported to have engaged, like Balaam's ass, in conversation, so that the analogy is not quite perfect. Here again, however, the story, interpreted with some measure of poetic sympathy, is immensely impressive: that the ass should have seen while the man was blind, furnishes food for much humble thought. But the modern reader, being assured by the critics that the narrative comes from that stratum of the Pentateuch which embodies the most primitive thought, will be inclined to acquiesce in the comment of Mr. Richard Free that "although many a man has undoubtedly spoken with the voice of an ass, few people will find it easy to believe that even one ass has ever spoken with the voice of a man."¹

Besides the four Old Testament miracles which Professor Smith describes as the "most rejected," there are others which cause little less perplexity to those whose categories of thought are not those of the palæolithic age. To say nothing of the retreat of the shadow on the sundial of Ahaz, there are the two cycles of miracles associated with the names of Elijah and Elisha, which include two raisings from the dead. It is curious to note how light-heartedly, in ex-

¹ *Is the Bible True?* (Robert Scott, 1923), p. 20.

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plaining the miracles of healing as due to the influence of mind upon body, Prof. Smith relegates stupendous miracles of the kind just named to a subordinate clause. "*Leaving out the cases of restoration from the dead*"—does he accept them?—"we may say that all other cases of the restoration of physical health are analogous to cases of auto-suggestion or faith-healing." But even when we conveniently "leave out" these cases—though one would have thought that in a chapter on "criticism and miracle" they were sufficiently worthy of examination—there is enough material in either of the cycles mentioned to give the apologete something to do, especially when he has deliberately elected to enter the lists against "men like Robertson Smith and Sir George Adam Smith, like Driver and Burney and Box and Bennett," and enters unafraid, because, in his own words, "I am amazed at my own audacity" (p. 21). There is, e.g., the great scene on Carmel and there is the ascension of Elijah, to take the two most outstanding incidents in the recorded career of that great prophet.

Now a gentleman whose identity is hidden behind the pen name of Juridicus writes of the ascension of Elijah thus: "It is when we read of his ascent into heaven that we stand aghast at the story. He is said to have ascended to heaven in a whirlwind, seated in a chariot of fire with horses of fire (2 Kings ii. 11). Now this was another physical impossibility. In recent years ascents have been made in balloons and

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aeroplanes in various countries, but no one has succeeded in getting beyond six miles (32,000 feet), on account of the rarification of the atmosphere and the intense cold. These aeronauts were provided with oxygen to assist respiration, and were clad for an Arctic climate. Nevertheless most of them lost consciousness before they reached the limit, and were nearly frozen to death. It follows that Elijah, without these precautions, could not have done more than they did, and therefore, assuming that heaven lay in the direction indicated by the writer, he could not have accomplished more than six miles of the journey. So Elijah, it would appear, never got to heaven! What then becomes of this picturesque story?" (*Ancient Hebrew Theories Examined Scientifically*, pp. 48 f.). This well-nigh unbelievable argumentation, at which we "stand aghast," is actually out-topped by the sentence in an appendix on Aerial Ascent to which we are referred, and which clinches the argument with the illuminating statement that "the only means we know of for reaching such a height are aeroplanes or balloons—not chariots and horses" (p. 65). Now the point is that literalists have really no answer to offer to folly of this kind: it is in fact the *reductio ad absurdum* of their own attitude to Scripture. But against the critical view of the episode such pseudo-scientific objections, which reduce the glorious imaginations of poetically gifted men to bathos, have no validity whatever. Let us see how the story is treated by a scholar who has poetry in his soul, and

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who knows something of comparative religion. "Suddenly," says Gunkel,¹ "there appear fiery horses and a fiery chariot. What this wonderful feature of the story means becomes clear when we hear that according to the ancient Oriental belief there are fiery horses and chariots in heaven (2 Kings vi. 17); these are the stars, which, according to very ancient ideas, are mighty heroes of war (Judges v. 20) that drive in heaven on chariots of fire (cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 11). To other peoples, notably the Babylonians, they are gods, but according to the faith of Israel, they are servants of Jahve, ministers of Jahve Zebaoth (Jehovah of Hosts). It is to them that Elijah is sent: the valiant prophet, who while here on earth so bravely fought for his God, is called after his earthly life to continue his fight in the battles of God up yonder; he has now become one of the Celestials. That was the reward Jahve bestowed upon His hero." Fighter on the earth, and fighter still! Could anything be more splendid? The blaze of glory in which his earthly life ends is but the prelude to another life in which the work he here began goes on for ever. A defence of the story on literalistic lines carries no conviction to a mind that knows the ways of poetry or of ancient religious thought: but such an interpretation as Gunkel's has nothing to fear from the shafts of ridicule.

Between the critics and at any rate some conservatives there is more common ground

¹ *Elias, Jahve und Baal*, pp. 31 f.

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than either are, for the most part, willing to admit. It would probably be within the truth to say that both believe in the effect of exalted spiritual powers on the minds and bodies of men—of course in accordance with, and not in violation of, law—and that consequently the powers which Paul claims (2 Cor. xii. 12), and with which certain members of the early Church are said to have been endowed (1 Cor. xii. 10, 28) may well have been exercised with results to which the word “miraculous” in the common acceptation of that term would not be inappropriate. And if this was true of Paul, how much more true of Jesus ! But where the conservatives fail is in establishing to the satisfaction of unprejudiced minds, the historicity of such miracles as the four from the Old Testament which Professor Smith has specified; and they have failed almost as signally to observe that religion does not stand or fall with belief in these things at all. This is a more grievous failure, for it touches the essence of religion itself. The Christian answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved ?” was given by Paul and Silas on a memorable occasion in terms as reasonable as they are simple (Acts xvi. 30 f.), and no man has any right, in the supposed interests of the faith, to add to those purely religious terms intellectual demands with which many an honest intellect finds it a sheer impossibility to comply. Our Lord warned us against the futility of emphasizing the cogency of an appeal to the miraculous when He said, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets,

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neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). It is characteristic of all His teaching to lay the supreme emphasis upon the moral and spiritual things represented by Moses and the prophets, and no condition of discipleship could be less like one of His imposing than that men should be asked to believe, on penalty of excommunication, that after His resurrection many of the saintly dead came out of their tombs and entered the holy city (Matt. xxvii. 52 f.). On this statement the late Professor Bruce remarks with cautious candour, "We seem here to be in the region of Christian legend." However that may be, the real test of a man's Christian quality is not his attitude to tales of miracle, it is his attitude to the person and the work of Jesus. "Master," said John, "we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we tried to hinder him, because he does not follow us." This man had given two indubitable proofs of being on the side of Jesus. He was casting out devils—and was not that part of the very work Jesus had commissioned His disciples to do? And he was doing this in Jesus' name, proving thereby that he was a believer in the power of that name and a disciple at heart; for, as Jesus said, no man could do a mighty work in His name and thereafter lightly revile Him. But John, with sublime indifference to these conclusive marks of discipleship, tried to hinder him for no better reason than that "he does not follow *us*." Wherever there is a man who in the name of Jesus is doing

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the work of Jesus, casting out the devils of vice, disease, or ignorance, there is a man whom Jesus recognizes as one of His, whatever be the attitude of His well-meaning but officious disciples: he has passed the supreme test, which is not a belief in miracle or indeed intellectual assent of any kind to any dogma or world-view whatever, but humble, earnest, practical sympathy with the purpose of Jesus.

The attitude of Jesus to the tales that gather round the names of Elijah and Elisha is most instructive. He must have known them well. They abound in miracle; and had His interest been in that sort of miracle, it would surely have been reflected in allusions to them. But of all the Elijah stories the one which He chooses to select is not the descent of fire from heaven upon the drenched burnt-offering and wood on the altar at Carmel, but that which tells how he, a prophet of *Israel*, was sent to a widow-woman of *Phœnicia*; and of all the Elisha stories the one on which He fastens is not that of the floating axe-head, but that which tells how he, a prophet of *Israel*, healed a *Syrian* leper. Significantly enough in each cycle the miracle which attracts Him is the miracle of the broad humanity that overleaps national boundaries, the miracle of the response to the divine messenger among enemy aliens, for it was the very reverse of the response offered to Himself by the folk of His own village (Luke iv. 18-30).

It is difficult for the religious public to ascertain the truth about the modern critical position.

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They do not for the most part read the books of the critical scholars, and such knowledge of the critical case as they have usually comes to them in the form presented by the conservative opponents of that case. That form is very frequently prejudiced and distorted, and the length of the foregoing discussion will perhaps be excused by the earnestness of my desire to secure a fairer presentation of the facts and to enlighten the minds of those whom such things may concern as to the real state of the case. The facts adduced in the course of the discussion are sufficient to show that, alike in the matter of literary criticism and on the vital question of the supernatural, those who attack the methods and conclusions of the critics have too seldom taken the trouble to acquaint themselves at first hand with the extensive literature of criticism, especially of German criticism, to enter into a sympathetic understanding of it or to engage in any real examination of its detail, and that they do not scruple to use the weapons of exaggeration, misrepresentation and ridicule. That is not the road to truth or peace. The "fraternal and irenic spirit" with which I entered on the discussion is not, I hope, inconsistent with a frank statement of the facts and a candid criticism of the caricatures and misrepresentations to which they have been too often subjected.

Criticism, like everything else, has a history. If it is alive, it cannot stand still. It must move, especially in presence of new facts or a new and keener apprehension of the meaning or difficulty

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of familiar facts. All who are interested in the Bible or theology should lay to heart the suggestive words which the late Mr. A. C. Benson has written with reference to art in his fine study of Ruskin,¹ and which are equally applicable to theology. "In all provinces of life," he says, "which deal with vital and progressive emotions, the only people who are certainly wrong are the orthodox, because the orthodox are those who think that development has ceased, and that the results can be tabulated. And thus they resent any further development, because it interferes with their conclusions, and gives them a sense of insecurity and untidiness, and the upsetting of agreeable arrangements." In God we live *and move*.

¹ *Ruskin, a Study in Personality*, p. 55. Cf. p. 66: "It is perhaps safe to say that all stereotyped opinion is erroneous, because it is essential to the life of ideas that they should grow and develop."

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WHAT precisely has been the effect of modern criticism upon the appreciation of the Old Testament? Can that effect be briefly stated so that the "plain man" shall be able to understand its general drift, to see for himself how the Old Testament looks as a whole after it has emerged from the process of critical study, and to judge for himself whether the new approach to it, in view of its results, has brought loss or gain to his personal faith and increased or diminished his regard for it? Though the detail on which the general case for criticism rests can only be properly estimated by one who has the training, the inclination, and the leisure to examine it, the demand for an intelligible conspectus of its broad results is not an unreasonable one, and it will be the endeavour of this chapter to present it, and to show how reasonable and impressive, in the light of modern criticism, is the historical and literary movement represented by the Old Testament, and how the prophetic literature has nothing to lose, and much to gain when interpreted by its methods.

Let me begin with a word of reassurance. In the series of articles to which I have already referred, I wrote, "The question is sometimes asked, 'How much has criticism left?' and the

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answer is 'Everything.' The land has been redistributed, but the ground remains—every inch of it." To this Principal McIntyre replies, "This is not the opinion of some who are pre-eminently fitted to judge,"¹ and he substantiates his point by quoting the opinion of Kuenen, Wellhausen and the biographers of Robertson Smith to the effect that they did not see how Smith could, consistently with his critical views, retain his evangelical beliefs. He further quotes Wellhausen's reply to a question of Sir William Robertson Nicoll, that he did not see how it was possible, if his views were accepted, for the Bible to retain its place in the estimation of the common people. This reply of Dr. McIntyre's misses the point of my contention. Quite apart from the fact that Robertson Smith did, as we know,² retain his evangelical beliefs, whether the distinguished scholars named saw how he could do so or not, my point was that, whatever criticism may do with the Bible, *the Bible itself remains*, every book of it. It is indeed a painfully obvious point, but it has to be pressed as against those who speak as if the aim of criticism were to argue the Bible out of existence. Its re-interpretations obviously cannot destroy the literature which it seeks to interpret, and which still remains receptive of a better interpretation, if the critical interpretation be found inadequate. The sentence, "The land has been redistributed, but the

¹ *The Record* of the United Free Church of Scotland, March, 1926, p. 113.

² *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, pp. 19 f.

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ground remains," simply means, when the metaphor is discarded, that the chief effect of criticism, especially as it affects the historical books, has been to re-arrange those books in different order. Doubtless with this re-arrangement goes a view of the history which is not the traditional view, but a view which—Robertson Smith and scores of other scholars being witnesses—is entirely compatible with a sincere belief in the supernatural and with the retention of evangelical faith. Every inch of the ground remains—ground as solid as ever—though held by other than its original occupants. Every book of the Old Testament remains, with its religious value absolutely unimpaired, though it may be assigned to a period other than that with which tradition associates it.

In miniature this may be illustrated from Ps. cxxxix. This psalm is by the superscription ascribed to David. Whether the words rendered "of David" are really intended to imply that David actually wrote the psalm, is a disputed point which it would be unprofitable at the moment to discuss: but undoubtedly the ordinary reader assumes, on the strength of the superscription, that he is reading the very words of David, who belongs to the eleventh and tenth centuries B.C. The critic, however, in view partly of the language of the psalm, which is late, and partly of the thought of the psalm, whose keen sense of the omnipresence of God is so much more mature than the recorded thought of David (cf. 1 Sam. xxvi. 19), and indeed than any

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Hebrew thought about God for centuries after David, believes that the psalm is at least about six hundred years later than his time. But in what way does the religious value of the psalm suffer from this chronological re-setting? "The ground remains, every inch of it," but it has been assigned to another occupant: that is all. No religious interest is affected in any way at all; and what happens here in miniature, with a result which every unprejudiced mind must admit to be unobjectionable, is precisely what happens on an ampler scale and with equally unobjectionable results, when the area we take into consideration is a book instead of a psalm. If, e.g., the Book of Deuteronomy turns out on rigorous examination to be, in its present form, a product of the seventh century, or the Book of Leviticus a product of the sixth or fifth, instead of coming from the hand of Moses, is it not as clear as day that the actual content and the religious value of these books remain, and must remain, precisely what they were on the other view of their origin? Doubtless the history of Hebrew thought will be very differently written, according as we accept one date or the other. With the earlier date, indeed, there will be no history of it at all, for Hebrew thought would then be born, as it were, full-grown. But the point is that this is a purely historical and literary question, which has no more to do with the essence of religion than the question whether *Sartor Resartus* belongs to the ninth century A.D. or to the nineteenth. Timid or anxious souls have therefore

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no need to be alarmed at any possible results reached by the critics on matters like these, which are purely external to the faith they hold. This has been put by Robertson Smith in words which should for ever set at rest the doubts of all who tremble for the ark of God. "Of this I am sure at the outset,"¹ he says, "that the Bible does speak to the heart of man in words that can only come from God—that no historical research can deprive me of this conviction, or make less precious the divine utterances that speak straight to the heart. *For the language of these words is so clear that no readjustment of their historical setting can conceivably change the substance of them.* Historical study may throw a new light on the circumstances in which they were first heard or written. In that there can only be gain. But the plain, central, heartfelt truths that speak for themselves and rest on their own indefeasible worth will assuredly remain to us."

Old Testament scholars are often twitted by their opponents with the precarious and uncertain nature of their conclusions. The "assured results," we are told, are so nebulous as to be practically non-existent. There is unquestionably a great variety of opinion on many far from unimportant matters, a variety which, it should be remembered, is created by the comparatively small bulk of Old Testament literature, and the consequent meagreness of the evidence, and which cannot be understood by those who have never examined the problems for themselves. In a

¹ *Old Testament Criticism and the Christian Church*, p. 19.

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conspectus of "The Present Position of Old Testament Criticism,"¹ I have fully admitted and amply illustrated this divergence of opinion. But only ignorance or prejudice could deny that, in spite of this divergence, assured results have been reached; and those who are anxious to know, with the minimum of trouble, where the critics stand, will be glad to see how these results have been tabulated by a scholar who has worked at the problems and watched the movement for nearly forty years. "We need not hesitate to claim," writes Professor Peake,² "that many assured results have been reached, which the future is not likely to reverse. Among these I may enumerate the analysis of the Pentateuch into four main documents; the identification of the Law on which Josiah's Reformation was based, with some form of the Deuteronomic Code; the compilation of that Code in the reign of Manasseh at the earliest; the fixing of the Priestly Code³ to a date later than Ezekiel; the highly composite character of some parts of the prophetic literature, especially the book of Isaiah; the post-exilic origin of most of the Psalms and large parts of the book of Proverbs; the composition of Job not earlier than the Exile and probably later; the Maccabean date⁴ of Daniel and the slightly earlier date of Ecclesiastes. On all these points it would be possible to name dissentient voices,

¹ *The People and the Book*, (edited by A. S. Peake), pp. 183-219.

² *Op cit.* pp. xiii f.

³ i.e., Leviticus and the sections of cognate interest in the Pentateuch (chiefly in Exod. and Num.).

⁴ About 165 B.C.

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but speaking generally these results would probably secure the adhesion of most Old Testament critics." This was written twenty-one years ago, but Professor Peake follows his quotation with the remark that, in his judgment, this summary of accepted results would even now command the assent of most Old Testament scholars. These scholars cannot therefore be accused of beating the air. Conclusions have been reached, and it may be helpful to readers unacquainted with criticism to expand portions of this summary, dealing more explicitly with the historical and prophetic books, so that they may grasp the broad effects of that criticism.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

Dr. Peake rightly puts in the foreground the analysis of the Pentateuch into four main documents. When that point is clearly grasped, the Pentateuch fills with a new interest and significance. The most casual reader of it must have noticed that it is a blend of narrative and law. The Jews call it the Torah, i.e., the Law; we roughly describe its component books as historical: in point of fact, it is both history and law. The casual reader will further, if he is honest, admit that the narrative interests him vastly more than the legal portion. His interest is alive practically all through the Book of Genesis, and over a little more than half of Exodus. The story of the beginnings, of Abraham the Father of the faithful, of Jacob

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the wily, of Joseph, whose years of sorrow were crowned with glory and honour, of Moses and his titanic struggle with Pharaoh—all these tales lay upon the reader their irresistible spell. The narrative is studded with exquisite and ever-memorable scenes—the wooing of Rebekah, Joseph's forgiveness of his brethren, the meeting of Jacob and Pharaoh, the sublime and stormy prelude to the Decalogue (Exod. xix), and many another. Then with Exodus, chap. xxv, the interest begins to flag and rapidly droops almost to the vanishing point. The seven chapters which there begin deal with the tabernacle, its material, its appurtenances, its priestly officers, and they have the effect of suspending our interest in the story. But that interest is immediately rekindled by the story of the worship of the golden calf, with its unforgettable picture of the anger of Moses, followed by his wonderful intercessory prayer for the sinful people, for whose sake he was willing to be blotted out of the book of life (Exod. xxxii-xxxiv). Then the story is hung up again by a very long section of no less than forty-three chapters, whose dominant interest, like that of the last interruption, is sacerdotal (Exod. xxxv-xl, Leviticus, Num. i-x. 28). The last six chapters of Exodus describe how the arrangements prescribed in the earlier chapters for the tabernacle were carried out to the letter, and this is followed by the Book of Leviticus with its multitudinous laws concerning sacrifice (i-vii), the priesthood (viii-x), clean and unclean (xi-xvi), holiness (xvii-xxvi), vows and

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tithes (xxvii). The sacerdotal and legal interest is maintained through most of the first ten chapters of Numbers, which end in a description of the arrangements to be observed in the preparation of the start from Sinai (x. 1-28). At this point the picturesque narrative is resumed which was broken off at Exodus xxxiv, and in the story of the wanderings from Sinai to Moab episode follows episode, alive with human interest—murmurings, the discouraging report of the spies, rebellion against the authority of Moses, Balaam's poetic prophecy of the splendid destiny in store for Israel (x. 29-xxv)—though this thrilling story is also broken in places by sacerdotal and legal sections (xvii-xix). From this point on to the end of the book the narrative is, with few exceptions, distinctly priestly in complexion; the vivid scenes of the other narrative are absent, and their place is taken, for the most part, either by statistics (e.g., xxvi) and legislative enactments (e.g., xxx), or by narrative, which is only legislation in disguise (e.g., xxvii. 1-11). Chap. xxxii, however, takes up the thread of the story again with its account of the settlement of certain tribes in the country east of the Jordan. The Book of Deuteronomy, which follows, is on the face of it not so much narrative as oratory: it consists in the main of three discourses, represented as having been delivered by Moses in the last month of the wanderings at a point where his people are separated from the promised land by little more than the river Jordan. The first speech embodies a retrospect and an appeal

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(i-iv); the second, which forms the main body of the book, after a hortatory introduction (v-xi), specifies the laws, religious, civil and social, which are to regulate the future life of Israel (xii-xxviii); and the third (xxix f.) in impressive terms sets before them life and death as the recompense of obedience or disobedience to those laws. With chap. xxxi the narrative is resumed. A few further instructions are followed by two poems known as the Song and the Blessing of Moses, and the Pentateuch reaches its conclusion with a brief account, as moving as it is simple, of his death.

Such is the Pentateuch. Even in view of so brief a sketch it is impossible to deny that it constitutes a real unity: it reveals the steady march of an age-long purpose, which brings Israel within sight of the land on which her great destiny was to be achieved. But it is equally impossible to deny that the fascinating narrative is frequently broken in rather tantalizing ways, and that the interests represented by the interrupting or intruding sections are legal interests, and, over large areas, ritual. It is at this point that the ordinary reader must carefully watch how criticism deals with these facts. No attempt is here made, be it remembered, to explain or defend the critical treatment: the justification for it will be found in the critical *Introductions* to the Old Testament, or to commentaries on individual books. But the broad results are quite simple, and to apprehend them clearly is to read

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the Pentateuch with a deeper and more intelligent interest than ever.

Deuteronomy may be first considered. In the main it is, as we have seen, a law book; and one of the assured results, as enumerated by Professor Peake, is "the identification of the Law on which Josiah's Reformation was based¹ with some form of the Deuteronomic Code, and the compilation of that Code in the reign of Manasseh at the earliest," i.e., in the seventh century B.C. This is the Book of the Law discovered and published in 621 B.C. and written earlier in the century. Let but one of many proofs be mentioned that this book belongs to that century. To put it in Driver's words, "Amos, Hosea, and the undisputed portions of Isaiah,² show no certain traces of its influence; Jeremiah³ exhibits marks of it on nearly every page. If Deuteronomy were composed in the period between Isaiah and Jeremiah"—say between 700 and 600—"these facts would be exactly accounted for." With the exception, therefore, of a few fragments of narrative of which the most important is that on the death of Moses, Deuteronomy may be disposed of by regarding it, in its present form, as in the main a law book, and a product of the seventh century B.C. Its laws, it should be noted, while they deal partly with religious matters, are not so elaborately concerned with ritual as the laws of Leviticus,

¹ See the story in 2 Kings, xxii f.

² The date of these books is 750-700 B.C.

³ 626-586 B.C.

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and the book further shows a genuine interest in the prophets (xviii. 9-22).

The four books which remain (Genesis-Numbers), after Deuteronomy has been set aside, are made up of narrative and legislation. The legislation, which is both elaborate and extensive, covering the whole of Leviticus, large areas of Exodus and areas larger still of Numbers, is inspired by a predominantly ritual or priestly interest, and its effect, to a modern reader at any rate, is to interrupt the flow of the narrative. This long, priestly section (which has a slight thread of narrative running through it, visible even in Genesis) is known to criticism as the Priestly Code or Codex. To what period are we to assign it? One thing is certain, viz., that, outside the Pentateuch, it is in the later books of the Old Testament that priestly interests predominate. Of course, there were priests at every stage of the history, and Hosea's denunciations of them (cf. iv. 9; v. 1) show how important and influential they were in the eighth century B.C., and indeed throughout the pre-exilic period generally; but in the post-exilic period, after the great prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah, had passed away, the priest is supreme and unchallenged to a degree unknown before, and this predominance is reflected in the literature. It is attested in the books that were written between the sixth century and the third. It is already present in the exilic Ezekiel of the sixth century, it is prominent in

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Haggai and Zechariah later in the same century, in Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah, of the fifth century, and above all, in Chronicles of the fourth or perhaps the third century. All this is beyond question. Now it is at this point that modern criticism comes in with one of its most important and illuminating pronouncements—resting, of course, upon a vast variety of evidence—by assigning to *this* period, and more particularly to the sixth and fifth centuries, between Ezekiel and Ezra, that large section of the Pentateuch which betrays the same legal, ritual and sacerdotal interests. Apart from the detailed arguments advanced in support of this conclusion, the facts to which we have alluded show that it is a most reasonable conclusion. In that case, the whole of Leviticus together with the cognate sections in Exodus and Numbers (and sporadically in Genesis) belongs to this later period: their spirit is the spirit of Ezra and the Chronicler. The most untrained reader could delimit this so-called Priestly Code with almost complete accuracy by his own unaided effort. This section is as unlike, let us say, the patriarchal narratives of Genesis, as one thing could be unlike another.

Now when from the first four books of the Pentateuch we withdraw this priestly section, all that is left is known by the name of the prophetic narrative. It is in this section that occur the tales that have charmed and edified the religious world for over twenty-five hundred years, the tales of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and

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Joseph and Moses and the wilderness wanderings, tales that have been more familiar to most children and grown men than the stories of the heroes of their own native land—so universal is the note they strike and so touched with simple beauty is the literary form that clothes them. They are called prophetic narratives, because they are written in the spirit of the great prophets and to illustrate the truths upon which they insisted. Those truths are moral and religious truths, illustrated, e.g., by the ready obedience of Abraham to the divine call, however stern its demands, by Jacob's vivid apprehension of the unseen and his humble acknowledgment of God's unmerited mercies (Gen. xxxii. 10), by the purity of Joseph when assailed by fierce temptation, by the invincible faith of Moses undaunted by the might of Pharaoh or the terrors of the Red Sea or by the more vexatious opposition of his unbelieving and rebellious people, and finally by the providence which hovers over the whole story from the call of Abraham to the death of Moses and the settlement of the people in the promised land; for it is now generally believed that the prophetic narrative extends, not only beyond the Pentateuch through Joshua—this has long been recognized—but into Judges, and possibly further still. Now these are just the truths on which the early prophets love to dwell: they are the world's most uncompromising champions of an ethical religion, and in them we get glimpses of that "philosophy of history,"¹ which is

¹ cf. Amos ix. 7, Hos. xi. 1-4, Isaiah x. 5 ff, etc.

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exhibited more continuously in the prophetic narrative, and which, as Paulsen has truly said, is the creation of Israel. Those who are content to read only an occasional chapter, or worse still a fraction of a chapter, can have no idea of the fine conception which animates the prophetic narrative, of history as the arena of a divine triumphant purpose. There is nothing like it even in Greece till centuries later. Again and again that purpose seems to be thwarted or imperilled—by the treachery of Jacob, by the malice of Joseph's brethren, by the stubbornness of Pharaoh, but on it marches undismayed. The motto of the whole history might well be the words of Joseph to the brethren, who did not realize that in the end their cruelty would advance *that* purpose and not *theirs*: "*As for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good*" (Gen. l. 20).

Such is the broad effect of the prophetic narrative, and it is immensely enhanced when we read it by itself, after separating from the first four books of the Pentateuch the sections that belong to the priestly code. This separation, as we have said, can be readily effected, even by the least critical reader, with more than tolerable accuracy. To put it very roughly and unscientifically, the sections that interest him belong to the prophetic narrative, the sections that don't, to the priestly. The power of the Pentateuch to fascinate and edify him resides in the former narrative rather than in the latter, and the book will have some chance of being restored to its

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rightful place in his affections when he recognizes and avails himself of that distinction.

The prophetic narrative, the spirit of which is so obviously akin to that of the great prophets, is believed by most critics¹ to fall within the century immediately anterior to them, 850-750 B.C. But here we must make a distinction. The close examination to which this narrative has been subjected ever since Astruc's epoch-making book on the Composition of Genesis in 1753, has placed it beyond doubt that it rests upon two documents, each of them prophetic in the sense already described. The older document originated apparently in the southern kingdom, Judah, about 850 B.C., and the later in the northern kingdom, Israel, from 75 to 100 years later: in the course of the seventh century they were blended to form one continuous narrative. The combination was a very natural one, as both documents covered the same ground and were written in much the same spirit—a spirit entirely different from that of the later priestly document, whose interest was legislation. Between the two prophetic documents there are subtle points of distinction, sometimes in their presentation of fact, sometimes in their moral and religious quality: morally and religiously, e.g., the later document is more mature than the earlier.² But with these things we need not

¹ The reasons are set forth in the *Introductions* to O.T., or in the *Commentaries* on individual books.

² As may be seen by comparing parallel accounts of the same incident, e.g., the departure of Hagar as told in ch. xvi (J) and xxi. 8-21 (E).

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now concern ourselves. A distinction, however, which it is of great importance to observe, is that in the older document the name for Deity is *Jehovah*,¹ in the later² it is *Elohim*,³ the regular Hebrew word for "God." This is only one of many distinctions; but, as it started criticism on a new track, and is still important and valuable as a criterion, these names have been used to designate the documents, which are now known respectively as the Jahwist and the Elohist, or more simply by their initial letters, J and E. Similarly, Deuteronomy and the priestly code are known as D and P. The combination of the Jahwist and the Elohist, which for practical purposes may be treated as a single document, the more so as its component parts, beyond Exod. iii. 15, are not easily separated, is known as J E. The literary history of the Pentateuch will therefore be represented by the symbols J E D P, which, however, represent not only literary history, but the movement of Hebrew religious thought.⁴ J E is prophetic in the sense explained, it is the historical counterpart of the

¹ Or more strictly, Jahwe(h). It is rendered by "the LORD" in our English Bibles, both A.V. and R.V.

² After the revelation of the name Jehovah in Exod. iii. 15, this document is also free to use that name.

³ This is also the name for Deity in the priestly document in the few places where it appears in Genesis (e.g., ch. i), and in Exodus as far as the revelation in vi. 2. After that, this document is also free to use that name.

⁴ First, D would be added to J E, and then P incorporated in J E D by the priestly school which gave the Hexateuch its present form. But that this form was not absolutely fixed even in the third century B.C. is shown by the difference in arrangement of detail between the Greek Version (3rd century) of Exod. xxxv-xl. and the Hebrew text.

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early literary prophets (Amos, Hos., Isa., Mic.). Deuteronomy is priestly in so far as it aims at the abolition of the idolatrous "high places" and the concentration of worship in the Jerusalem temple; it is prophetic, in so far as it aims at the begetting of a nobler public and private conscience, and at the expressing of religion in terms of social justice and especially mercy and kindness. P is priestly. Thus the symbols J E D P represent the movement of the Hebrew religious temper from the prophetic (J E) through the propheticopriestly (D) to the priestly (P)—a movement which has its exact analogue in prophecy in the transition from Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah through Ezekiel to Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Thus the Pentateuch emerges from the critical examination with its intrinsic interest decidedly enhanced: it now no longer merely embodies ancient traditions, it is the reflection of the passage of the Hebrew spirit across four centuries (850-450 B.C.).¹ Even the earliest document (J) is separated by at least four hundred years from Moses; but that does not deprive it of historical value, for the traditions of those early formative days would be among the most precious possessions of Israel. With regard to the legislation, it has been

¹ When Mr. Macmillan (*The Crucified and Risen Bible*, p. 75), seeks to discredit the literary analysis by airy allusions to J, E, and P, and asks "if that is the thing that has dried the tears of centuries of saints," it is enough to answer that no critic has made that claim for the analysis as such, but that for the noble presentation of the history revealed by the analysis he might and he does with justice make a very substantial claim indeed.

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repeatedly emphasized by the critics that though the Deuteronomic and priestly codes, in their present form, belong to later centuries, they embody usages which run back to a remote antiquity: they are very far from being, in all their detail, the creations of the later period.

To the representation by the symbol J E D P of the process which gave us the Pentateuch or Hexateuch objections are made, as one would expect, by conservative critics. One will derisively describe it as an algebraic formula; Mr. Woolley disposes of it as "this farrago" (p. 51). The objections are based on the composite nature of the Pentateuch as thus revealed, and on the anonymity of its authors. The former objection need not here detain us. It rests, as we have seen, on ignorance of the methods of Semitic historiography, and it takes no adequate account of the exact analogy furnished by the Diatessaron. The objection on the score of anonymity is equally pointless. We should be glad to call these writers by their proper names if we knew them, but, as a matter of fact, with the exception of the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, all the historical writing of the Old Testament is anonymous, and much else beside. No man knows who wrote Ps. cxxxix, which is the finest expression in the world of the thought of the omnipresence of God, or Ps. civ, which is certainly one of the noblest songs ever sung in praise of nature and her God. Above all, the author of the Book of Job, which many good critics believe to be without a peer in literature,

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remains unknown. The men who contributed to the wonderful literature that we know as the Old Testament were not consumed by any small anxieties about their literary reputation: such works as we have named needed no other authentication than their own intrinsic worth. The motto of the men who wrote them might well have been, in the opening words of an anonymous psalm (cxv), "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." We honour the great name of Moses, but we also honour the great men, although we cannot name them, who told his story and perpetuated his work.

The Hexateuch has a double value for the modern critic. It is valuable as embodying traditions of the patriarchal and the Mosaic periods, but its constituent documents are no less valuable as "tracts for the times" in which they were written. Take, e.g., the story in Genesis xxii. As an episode in the life of Abraham it is of thrilling interest. The impulse to sacrifice his beloved son, and with him all his own radiant hopes for the future, at the bidding of a voice which he believed to be God's, is the supreme test of his faith—harder far than the older summons to leave his native land and kinsfolk. But the story assumes a new interest and meaning when we remember that the document which narrates it (E) belongs to the same period, even if not to the same generation, as the great reminder of Micah, that Jehovah desires no man to offer to Him his first-born

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in sacrifice (Micah vi. 7). Ahaz in the latter half of the eighth century and Manasseh in the early seventh, when Micah was still preaching, had sacrificed their sons (2 Kings xvi. 3, xxi. 6), and a century later, in the time of Jeremiah (vii. 31), this cruel custom appears to have been widely prevalent. Micah and the Elohist are each entering their protest against it as monstrously inconsistent with the religion of Jehovah. Prophet and historian are in different ways doing the same work for God and religion, the prophet by his preaching and the historian by his beautiful story, the point of which is in v. 12, "Abraham, Abraham, *lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.*" It is the *prophetic* ideal that is embodied in the story; it is, as we saw, a man of *prophetic* soul who writes it; and those who heard it would listen to it, not merely as to a tale of bygone days, but as a rebuke of contemporary practice. In other words, the historians are really preachers, and they write with a religious aim, not merely to inform their contemporaries about the distant past, but even more to instruct them in the true nature of the religion which they profess. The Hexateuch becomes a new book for the man who can read it not merely as a record of the past, but as a reflection of the writer's own time, an appeal, in the garb of history, to his own generation.

The same religious motive governs all the books from Joshua to Kings. The hand that writes is the hand of the historian, but the voice is the voice of the preacher. This is to say, in the

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language of the critics, that these books were edited by someone who was passionately anxious to drive home upon his contemporaries the truth so eloquently taught by Deuteronomy, that obedience to Jehovah's laws would be rewarded by prosperity and disobedience would be punished by disaster. The spirit that controls the whole presentation of the history embodied in these books is exactly the spirit of the words ascribed to Moses, "I have set before thee life and good, and death and evil, in that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments. I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live" (Deut. xxx. 15 f. 19). This is what is known technically as the Deuteronomic redaction, but it is surely unworthy of the ridicule which the traditionalists have heaped upon it. It is, like the Pentateuch, the voice of earnest men speaking to their own generation and urging them to lay to heart the lessons of the past. These books betray at many points the influence not only of the thought, but of the language of Deuteronomy,¹ and surely nothing is lost for religion when we admit, as we must, that in their present form, covering six hundred years of history, they are later than the publication of Deuteronomy in 621 B.C. Apart from their large grasp of that long period and their fine sense of the inner meaning of the history, they represent the resolute attempt of earnest patriotic

¹ See the *Introductions* to O.T.

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men to point the moral of it all and to save their country from impending disaster. To understand the passion which inspires their brief and—often to us—seemingly unimpassioned record of the past, we have to remember that, when they were doing their work, the state was plunging from one chaos to another, and that within thirty-five years of the publication of Deuteronomy Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jewish polity was extinguished, and the long sorrow of the exile had begun. How can anyone who understands all this believe that these books or these men are dishonoured by the interpretation which the critics have been constrained by the facts to place upon them?

At certain points in the narrative anyone who has ears to hear can be sure that it is the preacher's voice to which he is listening, and it can be no accident that these points occur at significant crises of the history. The two most notable illustrations appear at the beginning of Israel's struggle with the natives of the land, which involved the peril of succumbing to their Baal worship (Judges ii. 6-23), and the fall of the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. (2 Kings xvii. 7-23, 34-40). Let anyone read these eloquent passages for himself, in which the writer expounds his philosophy of history and in particular his explanation of Israel's occasional triumphs and ultimate fall; let him read them with the impending fate of Judah in his mind; and he will be dull indeed if he does not hear in them the throbbing voice of the preacher, pleading with his foolish and

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distracted generation to return to sanity, obedience, and God.

The following words which I wrote many years ago received the warm approval of Professor Kautzsch, who wrote in a personal letter that they were exactly according to his own heart. I quote them, because I believe they would be endorsed by practically every Old Testament scholar to-day in Britain and America and by many, if not most, in Germany; and, if this be so, they are, I think, an adequate answer to those who charge the critics, in their treatment of the historical books, with "mutilating" the Bible. "The problems raised by the historical books of the Old Testament are of exceptional interest and difficulty. But it must never be forgotten that criticism is only a means to an end. It fails, if it does not lead us to a more reverent appreciation of the ways of God with men. The Old Testament is more than a field for the exercise of critical acumen. It is a word of life; and our deepest concern is with the life which it reflects and inspires, not with the literary problems which it involves. The large outlook of its historians upon the progress of the centuries; their splendid interpretation of history; their triumphant faith in Israel's mission and destiny; their overwhelming consciousness of God as the Lord of all, inspiring history with a sense of purpose, guiding it toward a divine event, bending to the consummation of His purpose the resources of the world which He created and controls, calling and equipping men from gener-

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ation to generation to advance that purpose and to interpret His will, following His people in love through all their wilful way, seeking, by a discipline which was often stern but always gracious, to bring them into that fellowship with Himself for which man was originally destined: these are the things that are precious to the Christian Church; and criticism is welcome only in so far as it sets those things in a clearer light and brings them home to our hearts with a mightier conviction. The problems with which criticism deals are real; their burden is felt not only by the professional critic, but by everyone who reads his Old Testament with intelligence and imagination. But they do not touch the heart of the matter. Deeper than all with which criticism can directly deal is the audible pulsing of a life at once human and divine, a life which grew richer and deeper as the centuries rolled from the exodus to the exile. The goal of all true criticism is to understand that life more adequately and sympathetically. No believing man can watch the purpose of God unfolding in Old Testament history without having his own faith quickened and rekindled.”¹

THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS

Next to the conclusions of modern criticism with regard to the historical books has the conservative soul been distressed by the attitude

¹ *The Messages of the Prophetic and Priestly Historians*, pp. x, f.

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of criticism to prophecy. Apparently the prophetic literature loses more than half its value, if it does not contain explicit predictions of events or experiences in the life of our Lord. Commenting on my remark that "in the sufferer here (in Isaiah liii. 4) portrayed who died for sins that were not his own, it is impossible not to see an anticipation of the experience and work of our Lord," who is "the perfect fulfilment of the ideal, though the prophecy is not a prediction of Him," Principal McIntyre remarks, "Why should it be permitted to us to 'anticipate' the presence of the Lord, to cherish the thought of Him as a prophetic 'ideal,' but not to forecast any of the doings of the Lord of the Hill?" He allows, as indeed no one can deny, that the prophets spoke to men of their own day; "but did they not lift up their eyes to the far horizon, to catch the splendour of the morning star, realizing that prophecy, though mediated by Israel, terminates in the advent of the Messianic King? Is it beyond the competence of a Spirit-filled man to hasten in vision down the centuries, that so he may gaze upon the glory of the Word made manifest, and learn to speak of Him (John xii. 41)? Why should not He who knows the end from the beginning sometimes whisper in the purged ear of His servant those secret things that have their home in eternity?"¹

There is little in all this which the boldest critic could not cordially endorse. Most of the prophets did look forward to some glorious

¹ *The Record*, March, 1926, p. 116.

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consummation in "the latter days," or "the after-days," and some of them connect that consummation with the advent of a particular person whom one prophet describes in one way and another in another. It would be readily admitted that God may whisper His secret into the ears of His servants. But what manner of secret did He whisper? Certainly not the historical details of the career of Jesus in which the older apologetic loved to revel. It so happens that the very word rendered "secret" occurs in several passages where the meaning is quite unambiguous and definitely excludes any such reference. It will hardly be maintained by any unprejudiced interpreter who knows the context that such a meaning can be read into the simple words of Ps. xxv. 14, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him," or of Prov. iii. 32, "His secret is with the upright." For our present purpose, however, the crucial passage is the famous declaration of Amos, that "the Lord Jehovah does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets" (iii. 7). His "secret" just means the principles which determine His action,¹ more particularly here the historical secret of the impending doom of Israel which, incredible as it was to Amos's contemporaries, was sure and certain to him, as he was in the "secret" of God's moral government of the world. In the context of the passage

¹ The same word is rendered by "council" in Jer. xxiii. 18, 22. The false prophets are those who, because they do not stand in Jehovah's "council" and do not know His "secret," are incapable of turning the people from their evil ways.

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which Principal McIntyre criticizes I had said, "The very deepest insight into life's secret is shown by the prophet, who saw that it is the mysterious privilege of the Servant of God to suffer for the truth (Isa. l. 6), and that through his sufferings and death others are led to confess with penitence, 'Ours was the pain that he bore, and the sorrows he carried were ours'" (Isa. liii. 4). This is the sense in which the word is used in the Old Testament, initiation—through friendly intercourse, as it were, with God—into the purposes, principles and methods of His action: this, and not the announcement of historical events hundreds of years before they took place.

There is no warrant in the attitude of our Lord to the Old Testament for believing that it contains a miniature biography of Him, or specific predictions of incidents in His career. There is nothing in His own words comparable to Matthew's appeal to the return of the child Jesus from Egypt as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Hosea xi. 1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son"—which, by the way, is not a prediction at all, but a statement of fact, and the son is not an individual at all, existing or yet to be born, but the ancient *people* of Israel ("when *Israel* was a child, then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt"); nor is there anything comparable to his finding in the slaughter of the innocents a fulfilment of the prophecy in Jeremiah xxxi. 15—which again is not a prediction but a lament of mother Rachel over her Israelitish children, who had been

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torn from their land by the cruel Assyrians more than a hundred years before (Matt. ii. 15, 17). Our Lord's allusions to the Old Testament are cast in a larger world and breathe a more liberal spirit. It is apparently of a general rather than a particular fulfilment that He speaks when He says, "All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning Me" (Luke xxiv. 44). True, in the verses that follow, specific truths are mentioned, but no particular passages are cited. It is almost as if He meant to discourage the literalist in his search for correspondences, and to lift men's eyes to larger things. He claims to fulfil the law and the prophets (Matt. v. 17), but what He meant by this claim is evident from another word of His, in which He reminds us that the essence of law and prophecy is love (Matt. xxii. 40)—love to the unseen God and to neighbour man. In this sense assuredly He fulfilled the law and the prophets. Professor Guillaume is undoubtedly right when he says, "It was not our Lord's normal method to cite the prophets in such a way as to suggest parallels between their writings and *detailed events* in His life."¹ To the disciples on the way to Emmaus, Luke tells us, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself—here again a broad reference with no detail. "St. Luke's reference to the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible, the Law, the Prophets

¹ *Expository Times*, June, 1926, p. 394.

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and the Writings (xxiv. 44), shows that our Lord's method was to take a general and comprehensive view of the whole range of Scripture. It is as though he said: Consider the general import of Holy Scripture."¹

In an admirable study of "Our Lord's Use of Prophecy,"² Mr. E. A. Edghill reached the same conclusion: "Our Lord's fulfilments and accomplishments do not concern predictions so much as ideals" (p. 435).³ Of much significance in this connection is the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, which Luke sets as a sort of frontispiece to the ministry of Jesus (iv. 16 ff.). On that occasion He read the beautiful passage from Isaiah lxi. 1 f., which begins, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me"; and when He closed the book and sat down, He began His comment with the words, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." In this narrative three things are notable: (i) the word *spirit* with which the passage is introduced. Jesus moves in the sphere of the spirit. The letter itself warns us, as it were, at the very outset, away from the letter, and ushers us into a sphere of spirit, where such external correspondences

¹ *Loc. cit.*

² In *An Enquiry into the Evidential Value of Prophecy*, pp. 399-449: a comprehensive, valuable, and too little known book.

³ G. T. Manley, in his recent book, *It is Written*, takes the opposite view. He maintains that "our Lord undoubtedly held and taught the Evangelists to hold also, that God conveys through the prophets not only a spiritual message for their own age, but, blended with this, a revelation in part of God's plan and purpose for future generations, and contained herein, the prediction of actual events, which as they happened could be recognized as fulfilments by those who had eyes to see and hearts to understand." (pp. 58 f.)

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as appear in Matthew ii, even if they were defensible, seem to be of very subordinate importance indeed. (ii) This spirit expresses itself in gracious words and deeds to the poor and the prisoners, to the blind and the bruised. But surely this is an ideal rather than a prediction. The specific deeds which are mentioned merely express and illustrate character, they embody an ideal, and Jesus is that ideal incarnate. In this profound sense, a sense far profounder than any mechanical correspondence would have been, He might well say, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." (iii) Not less significant is Jesus' sovereign treatment of this ancient prophetic word. The prophet had said, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, *and the day of the vengeance of our God.*" It is of the first importance, both for our understanding of the mind of Jesus and of His sovereign attitude to the scriptures of His people that, having reached "the acceptable year of the Lord," *He closed the book* and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. In other words, Jesus deliberately declines to endorse the proclamation of vengeance. When that all too human and too popular note is sounded, He closes the book: *that* scripture was not fulfilled in Him. In adopting the ancient words, He subtly criticizes them by His silent rejection of those which were not consonant with His spirit. It is criticism of the most delicate and reverent kind, but it is criticism of the most trenchant kind.

The scene is one of inexhaustible significance.

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When He closed the book and sat down, *the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him*, and they would be fastened upon Him with more wonder than ever when He proceeded to make His stupendous claim, "To-day is this scripture fulfilled"; for there, before them, sat One who claimed to be the consummation of the ages, the mysterious Being for whom the prophets of centuries long gone had yearned. That day in the synagogue Jesus sat at the very centre of history; not only were the eyes of the worshippers fastened upon Him, but no less the eyes of the wise and good men of all the ages before Him, as the eyes of all the ages since and of all the ages to be. In that sublime sense Jesus fulfils prophecy. This is what Paul has in mind when in the course of an argument there leaps out, like a lightning flash, the daring and splendid thought that Jesus is the great Affirmation, the Everlasting Incarnate Yes. "In Him is Yes"; that is, He is the complete and eternal satisfaction of Old Testament aspiration, the fulfilment of Old Testament promise and prophecy. "For of all the promises of God" made in the Old Testament or elsewhere, "the Yes," the affirmation, the consummation and satisfaction, "is in Him" (2 Cor. i. 19 f.). All that God purposes to do is for ever done in Him. To all the hopes and aspirations of the noblest hearts He says "Yes, it is all true, and they are realized in Me." He not only says Yes, He *is* Yes, the Yes become flesh. This view of prophecy and fulfilment is surely no less worthy than

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the other, and it is more inspiring and defensible.

That the chief function of a prophet cannot have been to make detailed predictions of Jesus is proved by the simple fact that in many of the prophets there are no passages which by any stretch of imagination can be so interpreted: there are none, e.g., in Amos, Zephaniah, Nahum or Habakkuk. And such allusions, when they seem to occur, are usually secured by isolating them from their context. Take, e.g., Isaiah's promise¹ of the son whose name was to be called Immanuel² (vii. 14-16). Obviously this cannot in its context refer to a child who was to be born nearly seven and a half centuries later: that would have been no sign to Ahaz and his court, and the sign that Isaiah offers is to *them*.³ Further, the Hebrew words and construction, which are exactly the same as in the story of Hagar (Gen. xvi. 11), suggest that the child alluded to is already on his way; and the verses contain the assurance that, *while the child to be born is still very little*, "before he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good," Syria and Israel will be ravaged in war—as they were, northern Israel in 734 by the Assyrians, and Damascus being captured in 732, the people of both districts being deported (2 Kings xv. 29, xvi. 7-9).

Too much has undoubtedly been made of the predictive element in prophecy. We have cer-

¹ In 735 B.C.

² Which means "with us is God."

³ "The Lord Himself shall give *you* a sign."

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tainly travelled a long way from the days of Butler, who could write, as the most bigoted traditionalist of to-day could hardly write, "Prophecy is *nothing but* the history of events before they come to pass";¹ but we have not sufficiently allowed ourselves to be guided by the actual contents of the prophetic literature, or by explicit individual utterances of the prophets themselves. Moses is regarded in Deuteronomy as the greatest of the prophets (xxxiv. 10), yet the only prediction recorded of him is, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. xviii. 15), and the context makes it quite clear that this is not a prediction of our Lord. The people are there warned to have no traffic with those who practise superstitious methods of ascertaining the divine will: Israel need never resort to such futile and unworthy practices, for she will in every perplexity have a prophet, a man like Hosea or Isaiah, to interpret that will. It would be no consolation to Israel to be assured that a prophet would arise six centuries or so afterwards to expound the divine will: it was *now* that she needed the guidance which she was tempted to seek in superstitious ways. But though this is the only reasonable meaning of the promise in its context, and the Authorized Version unwarrantably gives a Messianic turn to it by printing "Prophet" (with a capital P), it may be maintained with equal justice that the promise finds its larger, indeed its only complete,

¹ *Analogy*, part ii. ch. vii.

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fulfilment in Christ. Without believing that it was a prediction of Him, we can and do believe, with Peter and Stephen,¹ that He it was to whom it pointed, and that He it was who fulfilled it; just as, without believing that the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah liii was a prediction of Christ, we can and do believe that it was fulfilled in Him. "In Him is the Yea" to that prophecy as to so many another through which deep-hearted men expressed the mind of God. We are told² that Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch from Isaiah liii. 7 and 8. Nothing was more natural, and every critic could, with the best of good consciences, follow that illustrious example. The preacher who could not preach Jesus, "beginning from this scripture," would have no right to preach at all.

Dr. Illingworth put the matter well when he said that to emphasize prediction is to view prophecy in the spirit of a mechanical teleology. "And though the fulfilment of prediction thus understood"—in the sense expounded in the last paragraph—"may seem to many minds less evidential than the apposite occurrence of a name or date would be, it carries with it a more profound conviction that we have reached the spiritual heart of things, and are in presence of the Power that moves the world."³ An illuminating example of the little stress that even a prophet could lay upon his own prediction is furnished

¹ Acts iii. 22, vii. 37.

² Acts viii. 35.

³ *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 177 (cf. 174-178).

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by Ezekiel's prophecy of Tyre. In a brilliant poem he had foretold the ruin of Tyre at the hands of Nebuchadrezzar, and he had sung a dirge over her impending fall (chap. xxvi. f.). But she did not then fall. Ezekiel later admits that his elaborate prophecy had not been fulfilled, and he then promises Nebuchadrezzar the conquest of Egypt in lieu of the spoil of Tyre (xxix. 17-20). On this Kraetzschmar happily comments: "Ezekiel was great enough to confess quite candidly the failure of his prediction. He is fully conscious that his prophetic office does not hang on the fulfilment or failure of an individual prediction." So Herrmann in his recent commentary; the failure of the prediction of his prophecy against Tyre does not deflect him from the faith that "Jehovah is the sovereign Lord of History."

Within the Book of Deuteronomy we find prediction as an element in prophecy emphasized in one passage¹ and depreciated in another;² in the latter passage everything is made to depend on the moral and religious content of the message. This is certainly the impression that we get from the writings of the prophets themselves. While they do undoubtedly predict what Darmesteter has called "the broad lines of the future," as Amos predicted the doom of Israel and Jeremiah of Judah, the broad impression they leave upon us is not that of men who foretell the future, but of men who plead with their fellows to turn from sin to God, preachers of righteousness,

¹ xviii. 22.

² xiii. 1 f.

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champions of the moral order. Presumably no one understands better than the prophet himself what he is commissioned and equipped of God to do, and these are the classic words in which Micah, speaking for himself, defines the prophetic function: "As for me, I am filled with power,¹ and the passion for justice,² and energy, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and unto Israel his sin" (iii. 8). In other words, the prophet's business is to touch the public conscience of his time, to denounce and expose sin wherever he finds it, and to recall men to worthier conceptions of God and duty.

This definition, which need not of course be taken to exclude the promise of salvation on repentance as part of that task, must have been felt to be peculiarly appropriate, as it is repeated, practically word for word, by a later prophet (Isa. lviii. 1). The prophet's task, as so defined, is to touch the moral and religious life of his generation, and the secret of his power to do this is that, in Jeremiah's words, he has "stood in the council of Jehovah" (xxiii. 18, 22). Those who draw their inspiration from that intimacy attest themselves by endeavouring to "turn the people from their evil way and from the evil of their doings." It is of much interest that all three passages emphasize the moral aspect of the prophet's task, and his indefeasible obliga-

¹ The metre and the grammar show that the phrase "by the spirit of Jehovah" is an intrusion. But it assigns Micah's courage, insight and "inspiration" to its true source.

² "Judgment" is not a happy rendering: it is rather " (the sense of) justice " or "right."

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tion to elevate the tone and purify the life of society by speaking home to the individual and national conscience. It is of no less interest to note that a post-exilic prophet endorses this view of the function of his pre-exilic predecessors; for according to Zechariah (vii. 7, 12) the message of the "former prophets," as he calls them, was that "men should deal with one another in a spirit of justice, love, and pity, refusing to exploit the widow, the fatherless, the stranger or the poor, or to devise mischief in their hearts against one another" (vii. 9 f.)—a summary which is almost an echo of the words of Jeremiah (vii. 5 f.). Another point of interest is that in two of the passages referred to, Jeremiah, by implication, and Micah explicitly, are contrasting the true prophet with the false. The prophet who has not "stood in the council of Jehovah" participates in and promotes the popular degradation (Jer. xxiii. 14), and is actuated by low mercenary motives (Mic. iii. 5, 11). The mark of the true prophet is not that he predicts the career of Jesus correctly, while the false prophet predicts it wrongly : prediction—except in the broad sense that to such a people the true prophet can only predict doom (Jer. xxviii. 8, Zech. vii. 12), while the false prophet predicts peace and weal (Mic. iii. 5, Jer. vi. 14)—has simply nothing to do with the matter at all. Everywhere moral interests are supreme. One has only to read the third chapter of Micah to see what the prophet meant by sin. Transgression, iniquity, sin—these words have almost

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passed from our modern vocabulary; in the confessions of the Church they can be heard and uttered with complacency; they are vague, intangible entities which do not stir the conscience; but in the vivid pages of Micah they mean the importation of mercenary motives into the ministry of civil, political and religious service, they mean the building of Jerusalem with blood, they mean the tearing of the flesh from the bones of the poor, "chopping them in pieces as for the pot and as flesh within the caldron" (iii. 3). It was to end these devilries in human society that the prophets lifted up their clarion voices in the name of God (Isa. lviii. 1), and to hasten the day when men would willingly give bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked and shelter to the homeless (Isa. lviii. 6 f.), or that far better day when "there shall be no poor" in the land, because men would diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord their God (Deut. xv. 4 f.), as it was uttered through His servants the Hebrew prophets and most persuasively in the greatest Prophet of all, the well-beloved Son (Heb. i. 2), in whom their noblest aspirations were "fulfilled." How small must seem external correspondences between prediction and fulfilment, in the light of this conception of prophecy, which is the prophet's own !

Anyone may convince himself of the justice of this description of prophecy by simply reading the prophets for himself. It is, after all, only by "the patient investigation of facts" that we

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earn our right to an opinion. The judgment has been too often perverted by an unwholesome concentration on isolated texts on which the light of the context was not allowed to fall. Considering the range of the prophetic literature, the "Messianic" texts are in any case very few, and in some prophets, as has been said, they do not occur at all. The prophets are not easy reading; but as it happens, two of the shortest are also two of the simplest. Let anyone who desires to make up his own mind about the nature of prophecy read Amos and Malachi—Amos at the beginning of the movement (750 B.C.) and Malachi at the end (450 B.C.). Let him read them without bias, allowing them to make their natural impression on his mind, and let him gather, as he goes, material which will enable him to give an approximate answer to the following important questions—(i) What is the social and religious condition of the people whom the prophet addressed? (ii) What is his object in addressing them? (iii) What is the substance of his message to them? (iv) With what conception of God and duty does he confront them? And he may ask in conclusion, "What has this prophet to say to our time or to me?"

Amos.

Such a reader would be surprised to find how large a store of information on the social conditions of the time is yielded by the prophetic

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literature¹—immensely larger than may be gathered, e.g., from the Book of Kings. Let us begin with Amos. The introduction (i. 1) places us in the middle of the eighth century B.C., within the long and prosperous reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam, and reminds us that the speaker is a shepherd. His first word is an announcement of doom and desolation (i. 2). Why? The rest of the book furnishes the answer. But, strangely enough, Amos for the moment directs his gaze beyond his own people to the neighbouring nations—to the Syrians, Philistines, Phœnicians, Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites (i. 3-ii. 3), and in six little poems introduced by a haunting refrain, “For three transgressions and for four I will not turn back the on-coming doom,” he announces—or rather Jehovah announces through him—disaster upon each of the peoples named. Why? In every case the “transgression” which justifies the doom is specified, and in every case it turns out to be some cruelty connected with war (cf. i. 3) or the slave trade (cf. i. 6, 9)—unmentionable barbarities to women (i. 13) or violation of the great primal sanctities (ii. 1). From this significant introduction we may learn that the morality which Amos champions is an international or rather universal morality, and that the God whom Amos worships is not a national, but a supra-national God, and a God who hates and punishes cruelty wherever He finds it.

¹ Isa. v. 8-24, e.g. is a mine of information about the social condition of Judah.

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Amos's audience—for the prophet's audience must never be forgotten (cf. iii. 1, iv. 1, v. 1)—would listen with delight to the announcement of the impending ruin of their neighbours, when lo ! like a bolt from the blue, Amos hurls *at Israel herself* his message of doom (ii. 6-13). His previous announcements were but the skilful prelude to this; he wishes his people to feel that the law by which they are doomed is a universal law, and that from it there is no escape—not even, nay, least of all, for Jehovah's own people (cf. iii. 2). Note the sins which bring the doom upon Israel: the first is, characteristically enough, the exploitation of the poor (ii. 6), and among the others are impurity and intemperance (ii. 7 f.). The indictment of Israel in such a connection means that for Amos the crimes of civilization are as atrocious and as worthy of punishment as the cruelties of war. And the shame of Israel's sin is heightened by her ingratitude, it was a sin against the God who had shown His love for the people by His redemption of them from Egypt, by His gift of the land, and by His better gift of noble men like the nazirites and prophets (ii. 9-12). So doom swift, sure, and inescapable, will overtake them (ii. 13-16). It is a point of much importance that the law which the nations are condemned for violating is not any written law, but the law written upon the universal heart, the law which the unsophisticated conscience must instinctively acknowledge.

The next four chapters (iii-vi) enlarge upon the

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sin which justifies the doom. The prophet begins by reminding his audience of the truth *noblesse oblige*: Israel's unique privilege makes her punishment the more certain (iii. 1 f.). A message so incredible to the people needed authentication, and Amos proceeds to authenticate it, in a curious passage full of grim illustrations of the law of cause and effect, by asserting that he cannot help prophesying so, because Jehovah Himself has spoken to him and communicated His secret, as He does to all His servants the prophets (iii. 3-8). He then draws a picture of foreigners assembled upon the mountains of Samaria, looking down upon the wicked city: even those heathen hearts, he implies, would be shocked by what they would see there. The doom which must fall would leave of the people only an unrecognizable remnant, it would shatter to atoms not only every symbol of their luxury, but even the most venerated emblems of their religion (iii. 9-15). The prophet's hatred of the "palaces," which ran through the first two chapters, flashes out here again; they incarnate for him the "violence and robbery" by which their treasures had been acquired (iii. 10). Next he attacks the fine ladies of Samaria, whom he does not scruple to call "cattle," so sleek are they; and the brief words are alive with the prophet's sense of the perils of strong drink and his interest in the poor (iv. 1-3). Then he turns to their public worship: this, too, with its heartless externalism, extravagance and ostentation, is "transgression" (iv.

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4 f.). This is followed by a striking series of stanzas with the pathetic refrain, "Yet ye have not returned unto Me, saith Jehovah," which describe how God, with a sternness which was just the other side of a love that would not let them go, had dealt blow after blow to stir in them a serious mind of penitence and to recall them to Himself; and when all had proved unavailing, a yet more terrible blow is threatened, therefore "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (iv. 6-13). Note how much this familiar text gains, when seen in the lurid light of its context.

The next address, which takes the form of a dirge (v. 1-3), and which speaks of the decimation of the people, shows that the threat which echoes through the book is no empty one: it is of war Amos is thinking. The Assyrians are on the horizon, and within a generation they were destined to drive home with their bloody swords the truth which Amos had preached in vain. Yet, hoping against hope, the prophet appeals to them to seek God: along this path alone was life (v. 4, 6). Two words in this section cast a flood of light upon the mind of Amos. One is "Seek Me, but *seek not Bethel*" (v. 4 f.), as if there of all places in Israel God was most certainly not to be found: this illustrates Amos's abhorrence of the public worship of his time, and his view of it as inimical to the interests of true religion (cf. iv. 4). The other word is, "Seek Me and ye shall live; *seek good* that ye may live" (v. 4, 14)—a collocation which shows how closely God and good are associated in the mind

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of Amos: it is as if in the search for good men were really seeking God Himself. But what is good? Bethel at any rate is not good: i.e., Amos has no interest in a religion of rite and ceremony. But the context yields a very positive answer: "establish justice in the gate" (v. 15), as we might say, "in the law-courts"—*that* is good. Amos's conception of God and religion is ethical to the core. Not rites, but right—that is his motto. Note again how searching his demand is: not only "seek good and avoid evil," but "*hate* the evil, and *love* the good": right conduct must be inspired by pure motive. What a simple programme, but how comprehensive and inexhaustible! Everything is there. But no attempt has been made to fulfil it, so the day of light and gladness to which they looked forward would prove to be a day of unilluminated darkness, with no gleam but the gleam of an Assyrian sword—a day when Israel would stand helplessly between the lion and the bear, doomed to be torn in pieces; in the inescapableness of the judgment the thought of the omnipresence of God (Ps. cxxxix) is here clothed with terror (v. 16-20). To the people who would turn the edge of his unwelcome argument by pointing to their costly and beautiful worship, Amos replies with scorn that such worship as theirs with its animal sacrifices had never been the demand of God, not even in the great days of the Exodus, to which they were so fond of appealing: then and now and evermore His demand is that "justice should roll down as waters, and righteousness

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like a perennial stream " (v. 24). These are golden words, which reveal the very heart of Amos, and here again is the contrast between a ritual and an ethical religion. To Amos religion was nothing if it did not find expression in social righteousness, in fair play as between man and man: the true worship of God was the service of man (v. 21-27).

An unusually vivid glimpse of an aristocratic home is furnished by the next address directed to the noble lords who by their luxury, their indolence, their gluttony, their intemperance, their revelry, their foppery, their vanity, were hastening the day of disaster (vi. 1-6), when siege and pestilence, of whose horrors there is a graphic description in vi. 9 f., would do their deadly work. It is clear from vi. 14 that these threats look forward to the destruction of Israel by Assyria. Never perhaps has the feeling for the moral order of the world been more pregnantly expressed than in vi. 12: it is as inexorable as the physical order, and the man who defies it is as great a fool as the man who would attempt to drive horses over crags or to plough the sea¹ with oxen.

Chap. vii is a welcome piece of biography. In two of the three visions of the approaching end (vii. 1-9) the stern Amos appears in a new light as interceding for his people: the power of the prophetic preaching is rooted in intercessory prayer. Of quite extraordinary interest is the

¹ This addition does not involve any alteration in the Hebrew consonantal text. See pp. 20 f.

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clash between Amaziah and Amos, the priest and the prophet—the supercilious courtier priest of Bethel, lover of rite and ceremony, head of the established Church of Israel, on the one hand; and on the other, the shepherd prophet, champion of the ancient simplicities, clothed in no other authority than that of the truth he proclaimed and the commission he bore. In the flash of that collision between those two antagonists the struggle between the ritual and the ethical ideals of religion stands revealed. It is not surprising that a defender of the existing order, as Amaziah and his like must be, should have been shocked by the message of Amos, which must have seemed to him a compound of heresy and treason (vii. 9), and it only enhances our sense of the lion-hearted courage of the prophet that he dared, in the face of national and ecclesiastical prejudice, to utter such a message at all, and of all places to select for its delivery Bethel, the seat of the Archbishop himself. But of such stuff are the prophets made.

A fourth vision follows (viii. 1-3). Everything Amos sees—be it a swarm of locusts, a drought, a mason standing with a plumb-line beside a wall (vii. 1-9), an innocent basket of ripe fruit (viii. 1-3)—is transformed by his sombre imagination, haunted by the premonition of Israel's doom, into a vision of the end. The autumn fruit suggests that the year is near its end: so is Israel's year of grace. The fruit is ripe, so is Israel—for destruction.

Then follows an unforgettable picture of

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dishonest commercialism, which is one of the many crimes that justify that doom—a crime so terrible in the eyes of Amos that he sees the land, as it were, rocking “for this” in the convulsions of impending judgment (viii. 8). He takes us to the corn market, and shows us the worldly-minded corn-merchants, to whom the holy days are a bore, defrauding Amos’s beloved poor by every despicable device of dishonesty. Then, when the inevitable judgment falls, it will be too late for those disillusioned and desperate men to seek the word of the Lord (viii. 4-14).

The grim prophet surpasses himself in his last vision (ix. 1-4). There he sees the stroke of judgment fall upon an assembly of worshippers. In their mad desire to escape they scour the universe—dig down to the under-world, climb to heaven, hide in Carmel, throw themselves into the sea—but all in vain: everywhere they are pursued by the God whose demand for social justice they had met with nothing better than rites and ceremonies and animal sacrifices. So “I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil and not for good, and there shall not one of them escape” (ix. 4, 1). Nor need they appeal to the Exodus as the symbol of Jehovah’s ancient love which could now be trusted to avert the threatened judgment, for other nations had their exodus too (ix. 7). “Behold the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth” (ix. 8 a).

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It is all so terrible as to be almost intolerable, and we pass with more than relief to the vista of happiness and restitution opened up by the last section (ix. 8 *b*-15). Glad as we are, however, to find the pervasive gloom of the book replaced by the sunshine of its close, we are set to wondering why the prophet who saw so clearly the perils of wine (cf. ii. 12, iv. 1, v. 11, vi. 6) should give it so honourable a place in his picture of the coming days, and why in this picture there is not a word of that social righteousness for which the prophet had pleaded with all the passion of his outraged soul, and why there is no word of the repentance (cf. iv. 6, 8, 9, 11) which must precede and condition such a transformation: in other words, why a prophet whose message is ethical to the core should present us at the end with such a materialistic Paradise. These are questions which criticism is bound to raise, and it raises them not in any "destructive" interest, but solely with the endeavour to secure, if it can, an accurate picture of the personality and message of the prophet. If the passage does not reflect his mind, it reflects some other and later mind—"the ground remains, every inch of it"—and though its apparent materialism may seem to be a decline from the lofty ethical passion which inspires the book as a whole, we may yet be grateful to have its gloom relieved even by this very earthly light: for we cannot feel that the rest of the book is the last word of God. Amos's message is the truth about the will of God, but it is not the whole truth.

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With the question of the authenticity of the epilogue, however, we need not now concern ourselves. We set out to discover what impression a prophet would make upon us, if we disabused our minds of all prejudices as to what he ought to say, and submitted ourselves receptively to the thing he actually said. There is not a word which can be teased into any semblance of a forecast of the career of our Lord.¹ The whole drift of the prophecy amply corroborates Micah's definition of its function as "to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin." In the Book of Amos there speaks to us a man of overwhelming faith in the moral order of the world, consumed with the passion to create in his people a respect for that order which, unless they repented, would grind them to powder (vi. 11). To this man, as Cornill finely says, "justice and righteousness are the only reality in heaven and on earth. Thus through Amos the God of Israel, as the God of justice and righteousness, becomes the God of the entire world, and the religion of this God a universal religion";² and he hardly overstates the case when he says that "Amos is one of the most marvellous and incomprehensible figures in the history of the human mind."

¹ Curiously enough, the Septuagint, by reading two words as one in iv. 13, finds such an allusion. Instead of "declaring unto man *what is his thought*" it translates "declaring to men *his Christ*" (Messiah, Anointed One), mistaking *ma(h) secho* for *meshicho*. This happily illustrates the ambiguities of interpretation to which the text was exposed: cf. pp. 19-22.

² *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 46.

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MALACHI.

Passing over three centuries, let us turn to Malachi and examine his prophecy in the light of Micah's definition. The very first verse transports us into an atmosphere of discussion. The phrase "but ye say," which rings throughout the book (i. 2, ii. 14, iii. 7, etc.), is significant of the querulous and disputatious spirit of the disillusioned men (iii. 14) who formed the prophet's audience, ever ready to interrupt him with a question which demanded an answer and to turn his prophetic speech into a debate. Addressing a people who doubt the love of their God, he points, in confirmation of that love, to the devastation of Edom, Judah's ancestral enemy. "Jacob I love, but Esau I hate"—the hatred of this verse, as the savagery of iv. 3, shows how far even a prophet could be removed from the spirit of Jesus.

Priests and people alike fall under the prophet's lash. First the priests are denounced for their low ideals of office (i. 6-ii. 9). Religion must have been at a low ebb indeed, when the very leaders of public worship could sigh, "What a bore it is!" (i. 13), and present God with offerings that they dared not offer to the civil governor (i. 8, 13). This heartless and beggarly worship was all the more contemptible in view of the double fact that it was offered to One who was a Great King and that, all the world over, a pure and willing worship was offered to this same King by the unprivileged heathen whom the Jews

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despised. This nobly generous view of all sincere heathen worship as being really offered to the one true God—one of the most magnanimous utterances in the Old Testament (i. 11)—is in curious contrast to Malachi's normal attitude to the nations beyond the Jewish pale. In the last verse of the chapter the layman is drawn within the condemnation with a "Curse upon the cheat!" Priests and laymen alike—Jehovah will have none of them nor of their sacrifices offered with reluctant and dishonest hearts (i. 14). Better close the church than have its worship conducted by low-minded, half-hearted ministers (i. 10), and its services attended by people who thought that anything less than the best was good enough for God.

In chap. ii (1-9) the prophet returns to the attack on the dishonourable priests whom he curses as he had cursed the dishonest laymen; and in words even more drastic than those of Amos, who had not scrupled to address the fine ladies of Samaria as "cattle" (iv. 1), he announces that the dung of their diseased and blemished beasts will be flung back in their faces. The sting of this denunciation is made all the sharper by the prophet's contrast between their miserable behaviour and the ideal of the true priest to which they had been so recreant, and which he now proceeds to set forth in most searching and memorable terms. The true priest is one who not merely talks about God, but who 'walks' with Him in peace and uprightness—as he must, if he is to induce others to do the

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same—one who is a fountain of inspiration and instruction, one whose life is rooted in reverence, and who turns many away from iniquity to that fulness of life and largeness of peace which he himself enjoys, one who is a veritable angel of God to those to whom he ministers. But the priests of Malachi's time had turned their backs upon these glorious privileges, therefore it is their fate to be made "contemptible and base before all the people"—a fine piece of prophetic insight ; for in the long run even a trustful people will despise the clergy who fall too pitifully below the ideal to which their office commits them. These are not the men to trust with the welfare of one's soul.

The scene now changes from priest to people (ii. 10-16). The prophet is passionately concerned for the purity of Hebrew religion, and this purity is imperilled by marriages of Jews with foreign women; how grave the peril was we see from Nehemiah xiii. 23-27, and the violent measures which that great reformer was constrained to adopt in order to check it. The foreign woman was "the daughter of a foreign god"—that is one of the keys to the passage. When Malachi begins, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" we are tempted to suppose, especially in view of the generous outlook upon the heathen world embodied in the great words of i. 11, that he is thinking of a universal brotherhood, but the whole context shows that this is not so. The "we" are the Jews, who stand in a special

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covenant relationship with Jehovah, and marriage with a foreign woman is nothing less than a "profanation" of this relationship and a "treachery" towards the Jewish brotherhood. It is this consideration that to some extent condones the stringent legislation of Ezra, though it has its happy counterpart in the wide and tender generosity of the Books of Ruth and Jonah. But worse, if possible, than these inter-marriages was the divorce of the native Jewish women which they sometimes involved. The wife who had been solemnly pledged by Jewish rites in her youth (ii. 14) was repudiated when she was old in favour of the young foreign woman, who menaced all the precious things that the Hebrew nation and the Hebrew religion had for centuries stood for and that had been committed to them by God as their high trust for the world. Divorce was thus both a civil and a religious crime. Therefore "*I hate divorce*, saith Jehovah the God of Israel"; this immortal word is the other key to the passage—a word which alone would entitle Malachi to an indefeasible place among the prophets.

Another cause of Jehovah's failure to bless is that His people have lost all real faith in Him (ii. 17-iii. 5). This was no doubt why the priests performed the temple service so poorly and the people contributed so little to the funds. Though not avowed atheists, they had begun to believe that God was indifferent to moral distinctions and even good men were asking in sorrow or despair, "Where is the

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God of justice ? ” (ii. 17). To this the prophet replies that the Lord, preceded by His messenger, who will clear the way for Him, will speedily come to exercise His purifying judgment upon the unworthy priesthood. How naturally this promise lies in its context ! Yet we cannot forget that our Lord¹ and St. Mark (i. 2) find in the messenger and forerunner an allusion to John the Baptist. Here at last then we might seem to have come upon a specific prediction of an event in the distant future associated with Christ. But no one can dispute the truth of Driver’s careful comment on the passage. “ We must remember,” he says, “ that, though one detail in the prophecy was thus fulfilled, the entire picture, as drawn by the prophet, was not fulfilled ; for Christ, when He came to the Temple, initiated no purifying judgment upon the priesthood, nor was His advent followed by any such moral change as made Judah’s offerings more acceptable to God than they had been before. Malachi, moreover, clearly pictures a judgment which is to take place shortly, so as to satisfy the doubters of his own day.”² Between the messenger who was to prepare the way³ and John the Baptist there is a real and striking analogy;⁴ but in the context, which contemplates the *immediate* future, the former obviously cannot be

¹ Matt. xi. 10, Luke vii. 27.

² *The Century Bible, Minor Prophets*, II, p. 319.

³ Was Elijah *redivivus* in Malachi’s mind ? Note the similar phraseology and thought of iv. 5.

⁴ Cf. what was said about the Prophet and the suffering Servant on pp. 201 f.

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a *prediction* of John the Baptist. Here, as in all prophecy, we see how deeply relevant the message is to the contemporary situation, though the *ideals* which it adumbrates—as here, of the preparation for the Messiah—are only fulfilled in the later time. So we are free to pursue our way through the prophecy in the conviction that it is a vital message for the prophet's own time and broadly for our time, but undistracted by the desire to find in it detailed anticipations of the future. And at once we detect the old unmistakable prophetic ring in the voice that announces judgment upon those who exploit the defenceless, who defraud the employee of his wages, and the widow and the fatherless, and who rob the stranger of his rights" (iii. 5); we detect, too, the penetration of the old prophetic diagnosis,¹ when the moral diseases of society are referred to its lack of religion; the ugly catalogue ends with the trenchant words, "they fear not Me, saith Jehovah of Hosts" (iii. 5).

The next section is very characteristic of the ecclesiastical interests of Malachi (iii. 6-12). He charges the people again, as he had charged them before (i. 14), with defrauding Jehovah of His dues. The land appears to be suffering from drought, locusts and bad crops. To Malachi the explanation is simple, they have not fully paid their sanctuary dues. Dishonesty had brought a blight upon the land; let them

¹ cf. Hos. iv. 1: "there is no fidelity or kindness, or *knowledge* of God in the land."

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try honesty, and they would see the blessed rain descend in showers from the windows of heaven.

From the vision of this "delightful land" we are transported in the last section to the sorry realities of the present, with its humiliating revelation of the sceptical tempers and savage hopes which even the God-fearing men of those unhappy days permitted themselves to cherish. Echoing the spirit and almost the language of ii. 17, they maintain that religion is unprofitable and that the moral order of the world is a fiction: what is the good of religion if it brings no reward? Malachi comforts them with the assurance that God has not forgotten them; their names are recorded in a book which will keep Him in mind of them. And there would come a day of destiny when the difference between the good and the bad would be written in letters of fire—a day which would burn like a furnace and consume the wicked root and branch, and Jehovah's faithful servants would have the joy of trampling them to ashes under their feet. It is an appalling picture—sorry witness to the decadence of the age, and melancholy evidence of how far even a prophet could be from the spirit of Christ. The horror of this picture is slightly mitigated by the beautiful image of the sun of righteousness which is to arise with healing in its wings upon those that fear Jehovah's name. For them, the healing radiance of the sun; for the others, the heat of the devouring fire. Here, as with the "Prophet" in Deut. xviii. 15,¹ the Author-

¹ See p. 201.

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ized Version has given the passage a Messianic turn by the simple device of printing "Sun" (with a capital S). This is alike unwarranted and unnecessary. What we have here is a simple image suggested by Assyrian or Egyptian representations of the solar disk with wings issuing from either side; or it may be that the wings mean simply rays. In either case the meaning is that upon the dark world in which the upright mourn the sun shall arise, from whose gentle rays will stream light upon minds perplexed and healing upon bruised hearts. It is called the "sun of righteousness," because in its light their righteousness will be revealed. Though the figure is finely appropriate to the Saviour, it is clear that it cannot be a prediction of, or allusion to, Him, for it is a promise to the faithful of Malachi's own generation—"unto *you* shall the sun arise." The book closes with an appeal to remember the law of Moses, which the whole prophecy shows had been so grievously forgotten, and with the promise that, before the judgment should fall, Elijah would come to heal the dissensions of the home (iv. 4-6).

This brief sketch of Malachi goes to confirm Micah's definition of a prophet as one who is inspired "to proclaim unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin." There are only two passages, as we have seen, which could with any plausibility be interpreted as referring to Jesus or His age, and in both these passages the context definitely excludes any such interpretation. Doubtless the sin which Malachi exposed

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and reproved was of a very different order from that at which Amos hurled his indignant scorn. It is simply unimaginable that the earlier prophet should have made the divine blessing contingent upon the payment of the tithe. Prophetic religion was being gradually modified in the direction of an increasing emphasis upon ritual, and Malachi illustrates a highly developed phase of that tendency. He was very far from indifferent to those moral values on which the pre-exilic prophets had so uncompromisingly insisted, he had much of their passion for social justice (iii. 5); but while to him ritual, though not everything, was much, to Amos it seems to have been less than nothing at all. "Seek not Bethel." To him the only thing that mattered was righteousness. They were alike, however, in seeking to raise the public life of their generation, by denouncing, in the name of the God whose commissioned spokesmen they knew themselves to be, every unholy temper and selfish impulse, be it avarice or lust, that blocked the way of that advance, and by summoning their people back to the God in obedience to whose will was life and peace. That, and not the prediction of events to take place hundreds of years after he was in his grave, was the mission of the Hebrew prophet to the world. Darmesteter¹ says roundly, "The prophet never predicts." This rather extreme statement is explained in the soberer words that follow: "He sees the great lines of the future; the great

¹ *Les Prophètes d'Israël*, pp. 136 f.

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movement of things and ideas, with their distant and necessary consequences, is the only thing that interests him; the detail, the concrete fact escapes him; he ignores it, he abandons it to the charlatans of prophecy."¹ Or, as Cheyne² has put it, "A prophet's horizon is that of his own time; he prophesied into the future, but not directly to the future." The prophets, most of whom look forward to "that day," as they call it, and some of whom associate "that day" with the advent of a Person, believed that the gracious purpose of God for men would then be triumphant; in that great sense they saw the day of Jesus afar off, and were glad.³

THE ELEMENT OF PROMISE IN PROPHECY.

It is obvious, of course, that the whole counsel of such a God as Jehovah, who had inaugurated Israel's national history by a great act of redemption from the bondage of Egypt, could not be exhausted by rebuke and denunciation. "Comfort ye, comfort ye." These words—and they are his first—spoken by the prophet who heartened the exiles in Babylon, remind us how disastrously inadequate such a conception would be. Micah's definition (iii. 8) has to be considered in its implications as well as in its express terms.

¹ This statement, true in the main, must be modified in view of Jeremiah's prediction of the death of Hananiah within the year (Jer. xxviii. 16 f.), a prediction which Giesebrecht, Cornill, Volz, and even Duhm admit to have been fulfilled.

² *Job and Solomon*, p. 8.

³ John viii. 56, Heb. xi. 13.

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The prophet "declares to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel his sin," because until the conscience is touched and sin is forsaken, there is no prospect but that of ruin. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness or salvation. "How often would I have gathered thy children, and *ye would not*. Behold your house is abandoned to you. *Ye shall not see me*, until ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" No vision, no blessing, unless and until the mood change: here is the authentic voice of prophecy, heard in Him in whom prophecy is fulfilled. It is when the oppressed are set free and every yoke is broken, "when thou dealest thy bread to the hungry and bringest the homeless home and givest the naked a covering," *then*—and not till then—

"Shall thy light break forth as the dawn
And thy wounds shall be speedily healed."
(Isa. lviii. 6-8)

This explains the large place occupied by reproof in the prophetic message, not only in early prophets like Amos, but in the later like Malachi. We get a false view, however, of the essence of prophecy, if we do not remember that this is only a means to an end. It is not so much to morality as to God that the prophets—even the moralist Amos¹—summon the people; if they turn to Him, as Moses and all the prophets understand Him, their morality may be trusted to take care of itself. And the God to whom they

¹ cf. iv. 6, 8, 9-11; v. 4, 6.

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summon the people is a God who wishes them well, "gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy"—words whose music rolls through passage after passage of the Old Testament, and whose full meaning is seen at last in the love that streams from the face of Jesus Christ. Thus there are two strains of thought in the prophetic teaching—threat and promise—though they are but correlate aspects of the same message. Sometimes the one aspect is prominent, as in Amos and Malachi, sometimes the other, as in Hosea and Isaiah xl-lv: in Ezekiel, central in this as in so much else, the balance is evenly held, the first half of his book ringing with "lamentations and mourning and woe" (ii. 10), and the second opening out the most gracious vistas of restitution. As it happens, the two earliest of the literary prophets exhibit these diverse strains in conspicuous degree. Amos and Hosea are the James and John of the Old Testament—Amos the champion of righteousness, Hosea of the quality that is better than "mercy" (vi. 6) and that should be rendered by "kindness" or "love." Isaiah and Malachi follow on the track of Amos; Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah on that of Hosea.

Is not Ephraim my dear, dear son ?
Is he not a darling child ?
For let Me but utter his name,
And My mind keeps resting upon him,
So My heart for him doth yearn,
And pity him I must.

(Jer. xxxi. 20).

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Can a woman forget her babe,
Cease to pity the son of her womb?
Yes, such may indeed forget,
But never will *I* forget *thee*.

(Isa. xlix. 15).

Though the mountains should remove,
And the hills be utterly shaken,
Yet from thee shall My love never move,
Nor My covenant of peace be shaken,
Saith Jehovah, who pitieth thee.

(Isa. liv. 10).¹

These are the true disciples of the prophet who had said of his God, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him" (Hos. xi. 1); and the love which God had shown to Israel is, to the prophets, the pattern of the love that the people should show to one another. "Have we not all one Father? Why then do we play the traitor to one another?" (Mal. ii. 10). Already in the Old Testament there are radiant anticipations of the tender appeal of a later day, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John iv. 11).

ISAIAH XL-LV.

One important corollary of the view that a prophecy is addressed to the prophet's own contemporaries is that the period which it reflects is the period to which it belongs. It is for this reason that the section Isaiah xl-lv is assigned with confidence to the closing years of the exile²

¹ These translations are taken from my *Isaiah and Jeremiah in Modern Speech* (James Clarke & Co.)

² About 540 B.C.

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and the Book of Daniel to the second quarter of the second century B.C.¹ The exilic and Babylonian background of Isaiah xl-lv is as plain as words can make it. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are a desolation, her temple has been rased to the ground (xliv. 26-28), her people are languishing in Babylonia, and it is Babylon they are summoned to leave (xlviii. 20). Babylon is the empire which, for her pride and cruelty (xlvii. 6) is doomed to speedy extinction; Babylon's are the gods on whom scornful ridicule is poured (xlvi. 1). Cyrus is twice announced by name (xliv. 28, xlv. 1) as the conqueror by whom Babylon is to be overthrown, and Israel set free. He it is who will set free the exiles (xlv. 13) and rebuild Jerusalem (xliv. 28). He is not predicted as a figure of the distant future; he is already on the stage of history and well advanced on his triumphant career. Already victory has attended his every step (xli. 2) and soon he will burst Babylon's gates of bronze in sunder (xlv. 2). The prophecy naturally falls after his brilliant military successes had become matter of common knowledge, but before his capture of Babylon.

DANIEL.

With regard to Daniel, the facts are these. According to the book, he lived during the exilic period, i.e., in the sixth century B.C. Now certain statements about that period are in conflict

¹ About 165 B.C.

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with assured historical facts, e.g., "contemporary monuments allow no room for a king, 'Darius the Mede' (v. 31), between the entry of Babylon by Cyrus and the reign of Cyrus himself"¹ (538 B.C.). Curiously enough, however, chap. xi, clothed in the form of prophecy, betrays a minute knowledge of the history of the third and second centuries B.C., of the relations between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria, and more particularly of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes and his persecution of the Jewish religion. The direct reference in v. 31 to the pollution of the sanctuary, the temporary abolition of sacrifice, and the erection of a heathen altar, put it beyond all doubt that the impious and "contemptible" monarch (v. 21) is no other than he. Vv. 40-45 describe the last campaign of Antiochus and his death. The real prediction begins here, for as a matter of fact the anticipations of the writer were not fulfilled. He expected Antiochus to die in Palestine "between the sea and the beauteous holy mountain," i.e., between the Mediterranean and Mount Zion, whereas he died at Tabæ in Persia. The writer had lived through the horrors of Antiochus' persecution, but he must have written before that tyrant's death in 164 B.C. How is it possible, in face of facts so palpable, to maintain that the book is really a prophecy, written by Daniel in the exile? Or are we not bound to say that here again, as always, prophecy is the product of the period which it reflects? The element of

¹ Driver, *Daniel*, p. 70.

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profound religious value—and it is of the profoundest—is not the specific prediction of the death of Antiochus (even had it been literally fulfilled), but the confident assurance which breathes throughout the whole book, as through the whole of the Old Testament, that God was upon the throne, Lord of history, Master of His purpose, mindful of His own. Let the tormented defenders of the ancestral faith, undaunted by the lions and the flames, “wait” (xii. 12) but a little longer, and the end would be not Antiochus and his fury, but the everlasting Kingdom of God, and the resurrection of their martyred dead (xii. 2). This message is clothed in the form of apocalyptic in accordance with the needs and the fashion of the time; but who can deny that it is instinct with the power of God Himself, “inspired,” if anything in this world is inspired?

Now what is lost by this view of Deutero-Isaiah and Daniel? The traditionalists pay a heavy price for the view of these books on which they insist. They have to believe, on the one hand, that Isaiah in the eighth century B.C. and Daniel in the sixth, delivered messages which were hopelessly unintelligible to their own contemporaries, the one nearly two centuries and the other four before they could have any sort of relevance to the historical situation; and they have to believe, on the other, that in those two great crises there was no contemporary voice to utter the word of consolation and inspiration. The critics believe better of God. They believe

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that never, and least of all in such crises as these, has God left Himself without a witness. If ever men needed a message from on high, it was then, and they believe that then, as in the olden time, messengers were sent when they were needed—men of inspired insight and eloquence, whose eyes had been opened to behold the meaning of history and whose lips had been touched with fire from off the altar. Then, as always, God had revealed His historical secret to His servants the prophets (Amos iii. 7).

THE PROGRESS OF PROPHECY.

The object of this discussion has not been to sketch the history,¹ but to illustrate the nature, of prophecy; and a detailed study of the prophetic literature would only confirm the impression made by the sketch of the books with which we have dealt. Each prophet contributes his note to the great diapason. Amos's emphasis on justice and Hosea's on love are followed within the same half-century² by Isaiah's revelation of the exaltation (ii. 10-22) and the holiness of God (chap. vi), and by Micah's wonderful summary of the teaching of his three predecessors (vi. 8)—“do justly, love kindness and walk humbly” with the God who “alone is exalted” (Isa. ii. 11, 17). In the next century Zephaniah with his announcement of the “day of wrath” (i. 15) is one of those who prepare the way for Deuter-

¹ For this the chronological table in the Appendix may be found useful.

² 750-700 B.C.

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onomy in 621 B.C.; Nahum, probably between that date and the fall of Nineveh in 612, proclaims the destruction of that arch-offender against humanity. The turn of the century saw Habakkuk and Jeremiah at work—Habakkuk silencing his doubts with the vision he saw from his tower of the far-stretching purpose of God with its summons to patience and faith (ii. 4); and Jeremiah the human, at war with himself (i. 6 f., xx. 9) vainly pleading in tones of infinite tenderness for a repentance which would avert the final catastrophe,¹ yet looking forward through his tears to the "new covenant" (xxxii. 31 ff.) and the religion of the spirit. He is followed by Ezekiel, who from his exile first pictures with remorseless detail the imminent doom of unholy Jerusalem, and then, when the blow has fallen, turns the faces of his people to the future, comforts them with the assurance that they will yet rise from the grave in which exile had buried them, and sketches the programme by which holiness may be achieved when they return to their own land. Towards the end of the exile there arose a greater than Ezekiel, one whose name is unknown, but whose work liveth for evermore (Isa. xl-lv). He heartened his fainting people by reminding them that their God was the majestic God of nature (xl. 26 ff.) and of history (xli), the First and the Last, to whom all power belonged; and above all, by holding before them their glorious destiny as the Servant of Jehovah and the revealers of true religion to the world

¹ Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C.

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(xlii. 1-4)—a destiny which had spelt for them sorrow and suffering, but would at last be consummated in glory and honour (liii). Back in their land once more, and discouraged by the meanness of their plight (Hag. i. 6), they are cheered by Haggai and Zechariah¹ and stimulated to rebuild their ruined temple and to give themselves whole-heartedly to the offices of religion. If they do, and if besides they uphold the old prophetic ideals of justice and mercy in their social relations (Zech. vii. 9, viii. 16 f.), Zechariah assures them that they will yet be the wonder of the world, and men of other nations will flock to them to learn the blessed secret of their prosperity (viii. 20-23). In the next century, as difficulties multiply and despondency continues, the unknown writer of Isaiah lvi-lxvi summons them to the true "fast," which is the fast from wrong-doing (lviii. 6 f.), and holds before them again the old forgotten ideal of kindness to the poor and the hungry. Malachi, as we have seen, his contemporary, renewed the emphasis of Haggai and Zechariah upon the fulfilment of ritual obligations and assured the faithful that the sun would rise upon their darkened world once more and in its light they would stand forth vindicated. Joel looks forward to the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh. Through the late and anonymous prophecies preserved in Zechariah ix-xiv we get glimpses of the coming days when Jehovah

¹ 520-518 B.C. Of Zech. only chaps. i.-viii. belong to this period.

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shall be King over all the earth, and pilgrims will journey from distant lands to Jerusalem to worship Him (xiv. 9, 16). It would be pleasant to think that near, if not at, the end of this great succession comes the Book of Jonah with its vision of a Love which stretches across the world.

Thus it is clear that prophecy marches *pari passu* with history; yet, concerned though it be with the world that now is, its eyes are often turned upon the "latter days."

The critical approach having been amply illustrated upon two great areas of the Old Testament, the historical and the prophetic books, it will hardly be necessary to pursue our way through the remaining books, as the essence of the method is its reasonableness. It assumes that writers meant what they said, and that that can best be understood in its literary, psychological and historical context, i.e., when it is related to the passage as a whole, to the mind of the writer and the ideas which he inherited, shared or originated, and to the contemporary situation, where that is discoverable. In poetry, e.g., in the Psalms, this is seldom discoverable with certainty; but that is not of fatal consequence, for we are thus forced back upon the universal aspect of the poem, with which, after all, it is the province of poetry to deal. Let us, then, in conclusion, very briefly illustrate the critical approach in its application to three books of the Hagiographa—the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and the Psalms.

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THE SONG OF SONGS.

If we may assume that a Biblical writer meant what he said, the nature of the lyrics that make up the Song of Songs is obvious enough. Here is a verse or two,¹ and the very first strikes the note of the whole.

O for a kiss from thy lips :
Thy caresses are better than wine.
Thy perfumes are fine in their fragrance :
As perfumes poured forth is thy name :
And therefore the maidens love thee.
(i. 2 f.).

Arise, my beloved,
My fair, come away.
For see ! the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone,
The flowers appear in the land,
The time for pruning is come,
And the voice of the ring-dove is heard.
The figs on the fig trees are reddening,
The vines are all blossom and fragrance.
Arise, my beloved,
My fair, come away.
(ii. 10-13).

Thou hast ravished me, sister² and bride.
One glance of thine eyes hath bewitched me,
One glint of thy necklace.
How sweet thy caress, sister bride !
How much better than wine thy caresses !
(iv. 9. f).

¹ The translations are from my *Wisdom Books in Modern Speech and Rhythmical Form*. (James Clarke & Co).

² An endearing name for lover, common in Egyptian love songs. (cf. E. A. Willis Budge, *The Dweller on the Nile* (1926), pp. 23 f.)

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These are indubitably love-poems,¹ possibly wedding-songs; and this charming anthology reaches its climax in the noble eulogy of love in viii. 6 f.:

Love is strong as death,
Its passion is fierce as the grave;
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
Its flames are like the lightning.
No waters can quench it,
Nor floods overwhelm it.
If a man should give all in his house for it,
Utterly scorned would he be.

But a glance at the summaries of the chapters as given in the Authorized Version reveals a very different story. The theme of chap. ii, we are there informed, is "the mutual love of Christ and his church; the hope and calling of the church; Christ's care of the church; the profession of the church, her faith and hope." In chap. iv, which is clearly a poem in praise of the charms of the bride, we are told that "Christ setteth forth the graces of the church; he sheweth his love to her: the church prayeth to be made fit for his presence," and so on. Clearly this is not a summary at all, but an interpretation, biased by the theory that the bridegroom and bride are Christ and His Church, which modifies in a Christian direction the early

¹ They would still be so, and. as such—especially in view of viii. 6 f.—a real contribution to monogamic sentiment, even if Prof. T. J. Meek, now of Toronto, were right in supposing that the songs have their origin in the liturgy of the Tammuz-Ishtar cult. It would be an instance of the power of the Hebrew genius to transform alien material.

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Jewish view that they represent Jehovah and Israel. But if the poem does not mean what it says, who is to tell us what it means? No Pope, or ecclesiastical council, or tradition can pronounce the authoritative word here.

ECCLESIASTES.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is traditionally associated with the name of Solomon, and there is a singular propriety in the choice of such a man for the discussion of such a theme. The book is a criticism of life, and who more competent to pass such a criticism than the great king who had tasted all of its sweets, who had wealth enough to satisfy every whim and indulge every passion, who had unique experience of power and fame as well as of pleasure, and who at the same time was gifted with a wisdom as exceptional as his opportunities, a wisdom which would give unique value to his judgment? Yet nothing is more certain than that Solomon was not the author of that book. This certainty rests on many grounds, any one of which would be decisive. The language is very late Hebrew, some of its vocabulary does not appear in literature till seven hundred years after Solomon was in his grave; and even so conservative a critic as Delitzsch admits that if the book is by Solomon, there is no history of the Hebrew language. Further, the whole trend of the discussion suggests contact with Greek culture. Even if there are no direct allusions to Greek philosophical sys-

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tems—and some scholars maintain that there are¹—the whole speculative atmosphere of the book, which is as unlike as possible to any literature of the pre-exilic period, points conclusively to the influence of the Greek mind upon Jewish thought; and in accordance with this is the hint in xii. 12 that the writer is living in a literary age, when books are multiplying and study has become a weariness—features which were certainly not true of the age of Solomon. For these and other reasons scholars assign the book roughly to 200 B.C. But if the writer speaks in the character of Solomon—than whom, as we have seen, none could be more fitting—there is surely no harm in that. The sombre realism of the book (cf. iv. 1) retains its power, whoever wrote it, and its melancholy criticism of the futility of a life that has lost its hold upon the eternal things is of permanent value.

THE PSALMS.

The Psalter needs no defence either from critic or traditionalist. It is its own mighty witness to the depths of the human heart and to its need of, and satisfaction in, God. But there are questions of interpretation which an honest study of it will refuse to decide merely on the evidence of tradition. Nearly half the psalms in the Psalter—seventy-three, to be precise—

¹ Dr. Harry Ranston, in *Ecclesiastes and Early Greek Wisdom Literature*, argues that Eccles. "was not indebted to the contemporaneous philosophy of the higher schools, but to the maxims of the popular moralists," more particularly to Theognis (p.78).

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are associated by the superscription with the name of David, and most readers naturally imagine that they are reading the very words of David. Some of the superscriptions (e.g., those of Pss. iii, vii, xxxiv) go further and associate the psalms with particular events in his career. On the strength of these superscriptions, it has even been thought possible to write an account of his inner life. Over forty years ago Dr. Maclaren wrote a book on "The Life of David as Reflected in his Psalms." No scholar would dream of doing that to-day. It is quite certain that the superscriptions are not original and integral to the psalms themselves, for the superscriptions of the Greek Version do not quite agree with those of the Hebrew: sometimes they assign to David (cf. Ps. xcv) or to other authors (for example, Haggai and Zechariah; cf. Ps. cxlvi) a psalm which is anonymous in the Hebrew; and sometimes they add information which is not warranted by our Hebrew text (cf. Ps. cxliv, where to "David" the Greek Version adds "touching Goliath"). The Syriac Version again differs from both the Greek and the Hebrew. Had the titles been original to the psalms, such variety would have been impossible. Therefore it is fair to conclude that the titles are no part of the psalms, but were added afterwards.

Further, the superscriptions are sometimes at variance with the explicit statements of the historical books. A curious illustration of this is found in Ps. xxxiv, whose superscription calls the Philistine king, before whom David

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feigned madness, Abimelech instead of Achish (cf. 1 Sam. xxi. 14). Nor can the names of the authors any more than the occasions assigned in the superscriptions always be reconciled with the contents of the psalms. Asaph, a reputed contemporary of David (1 Chr. xvi. 7) could not have complained, as does the writer of Ps. lxxiv, that the temple had been devastated, for the very good reason that it had not yet been built. If, then, the superscriptions, not being strictly reliable, must be left out of account, it will be next to impossible to determine the authorship of any psalm, and the occasion can only be determined, if at all, by an examination of the psalm itself.

With regard to passages commonly regarded as Messianic, the critical principle would be that their strict and proper meaning is the meaning they bear in relation to their context. Take, e.g., the well-known verse of the sixteenth Psalm (v. 10), "Thou wilt not abandon my soul (i.e., me) to Sheol (i.e., the underworld), neither wilt Thou suffer Thy beloved¹ to see the pit." In the Authorized Version—to say nothing of the Messianic turn given to the verse by the unwarranted use of capitals (Holy One)—the issue is needlessly complicated by three mistranslations: *in*, *hell*, and *corruption* are all alike wrong. The Revised Version corrects the first two, but unhappily

¹ It is impossible in any single word to reproduce all the ideas that attach to this word in the Hebrew. It suggests one between whom and God there is a bond of leal love; therefore, on the one hand "beloved," on the other "holy" or "pious one," "saint."

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leaves "corruption" in the text, relegating the correct meaning "pit" to the margin. The point is of importance, because on it depends whether the deliverance of the person spoken of is conceived to be a deliverance after death or before death, or even from death. The A.V. shuts us up to the first interpretation: the person is *in* the underworld, but will not be subject to *corruption*.¹ The meaning, however, is quite certainly not that: the person is not to be abandoned at all (or meantime) to the underworld, or to see the nether pit. But who is the person? The natural answer is surely that it is the speaker himself: the "beloved" of one clause is the "me" (or "my soul") of the other, and the speaker who thus expresses his confidence in Jehovah's power to preserve him is the speaker who in v. 4 has said that he will have nothing to do with idolatry, and v. 10 is just the sublimest expression of his faith, of which the whole psalm is the confession. Curiously enough, the Hebrew word for "beloved" (or "holy one") is in the plural, and there are scholars who follow Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 A.D.) in believing that this is the real clue to the psalm, and that it is not the individual, but the Church that is here confessing her faith, especially as it is not the individual but the Church that alone could claim to be exempt from death. Most scholars to-day, however, believe

¹ The Greek version, by mistaking the root, mistranslates the word thus, and this mistranslation has affected subsequent versions.

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that the psalm expresses an individual faith, in which case the singer merely expresses his confidence that God will not now give him over to death, but will graciously allow him to live the normal length of days.¹ The one thing certain is that, on the psalmist's lips, this is not a prediction of some deliverance to be experienced by another, it is the confession of his faith in God's power to preserve himself: *he* is the beloved whom God will not abandon. Behind Peter's application of this verse to Jesus in Acts ii. 31 is the great thought that Jesus is the incarnate fulfilment of the deepest hopes, yearnings and assurances of the olden time. If the psalmist could cherish the unshaken confidence that, as one of God's "holy" and "beloved" ones, God would not abandon him, how much more certain was it that He would not only not abandon His perfectly holy and His well-beloved Son, but would raise Him up in power and glory. This is not indeed the form of Peter's argument, but it is its substance; and in this deep, inward sense all the passages which have been described as Messianic may be worthily interpreted, in a way which does justice alike to their original meaning and to that larger meaning with which the coming of Jesus has filled them.

In the Psalter, as in prophecy, the passages which could with any plausibility be regarded as Messianic in the narrower sense are few;

¹ Professor A. C. Welch, however, considers this interpretation inadequate: to him the Ps. seems to point to the writer's conviction of individual immortality (*The Psalter*, pp. 114-118).

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and with justice the critics concentrate upon the attempt to discover what meaning each psalm and each prophecy had for the man who wrote it. Like all great literature, the Bible gathers to itself a deeper meaning with the progress of the ages—deeper, but not different. Its permanent value is subtly asserted in the simple phrase, “The scripture *saith*.”¹ But to know what it *means*, we are, if we are students worthy of the name, under the religious obligation to do what in us lies to discover, “by the patient investigation of facts,” what it *meant*. That is all that is meant by critical study, and, as practised by Christian scholars, it is not only not to be deprecated or feared, but to be cordially welcomed, as bringing us ever nearer to the ultimate truth. That study demands resolute honesty of mind, delicacy of judgment, uncompromising devotion to the truth of ascertained fact, unwearied patience, unflinching courage; but the reader who brings these qualities of mind and heart to the study of the Old Testament will be smitten with an ever-growing sense of its wonder, and with reverent gratitude he will acknowledge it as one of the divine messengers who prepared the way for the coming of Him “in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

¹ cf. Rom. ix. 17, x. 11, 1 Tim. v. 18, Jas. iv. 5.

APPENDIX

THE following table of approximate dates will give a reasonably adequate idea of the development of Old Testament literature, according to the critical reconstruction.¹ That this development may be understood in relation to the history, the principal historical dates are added in italics.

B.C.

<i>The Exodus</i>	? 1445, ? 1345, or ? 1225	
<i>Period of Judges</i>	? 1400, ? 1300 or ? 1200 to 1020	
Traditions, War Ballads, and other poetry (basis of the early historical works) in oral circulation, from the settlement in Canaan up to		? 900
<i>David</i>	- - - - -	1000
<i>Division of the Kingdom</i>	- - -	937
The prophetic history of the Jahwist document (J)	- - - -	850
<i>Elijah and Elisha</i>	- - - -	850-800
The Prophetic history of the Elohist document (E)	- - - -	750
<i>Jeroboam II of Israel</i>	- - -	781-740
<i>Uzziah of Judah</i>	- - -	782-740
Amos and Hosea-	- - - -	750-735
<i>Fall of Samaria</i>	- - -	721
Isaiah i-xxxix (except xxiv-xxvii)	-	740-700

¹ An elaborate and valuable *Chronological Chart of Old Testament Life and Literature* will be found in Professor I. G. Matthews *Old Testament Life and Literature* (Macmillan), pp. 320-335. A similar Chronological Table, by Miss E. W. Hippiisley, S.Th., will be found at the end of Professor T. H. Robinson's *Decline and Fall of the Hebrew Kingdoms*.

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Micah	- - - - -	725-690
<i>Hezekiah</i>	- - - - -	725-696
<i>Manasseh</i>	- - - - -	696-641
<i>Josiah</i>	- - - - -	639-608
Zephaniah	- - - - -	630
Deuteronomy, written probably in Manasseh's reign, published	-	621
Nahum	- - - - -	615
<i>Fall of Nineveh</i>	- - - - -	612
Jeremiah	- - - - -	626-586
Habakkuk assigned by some recent scholars to time of Alexander the Great, 330 B.C., but by most to <i>Exile</i> , 597 B.C. (first deportation), 586 (second deportation) to	- -	600 537
Ezekiel	- - - - -	592-570
All the historical books up to Kings edited in the spirit of Deuteronomy		600-560
Lamentations	- - - - -	586-550
Isaiah xl-lv.	- - - - -	540
<i>Return from Exile</i>	- - - - -	537
Haggai and Zechariah i-viii.	- -	520-518
<i>Building of Second Temple</i>	- -	520-516
Psalter collected, edited, and much of it composed	- - - - -	520-150
Priestly Code (P.) ; i. e. Leviticus and cog- nate sections of Hexateuch	- -	550-450
Malachi and Isaiah lvi-lxvi	- - -	460
<i>Ezra comes from Babylon to Jerusalem</i>	? 458 or ?	397
Ruth	- - - - -	450
<i>Nehemiah comes to Jerusalem, re- builds the walls ; is Governor of Judah</i>	- - - - -	445
<i>Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem</i>		432
Joel, Jonah, Obadiah, Job	- - -	450-400
Pentateuch in practically its present form		400
<i>Alexander the Great</i>	- - -	356-323

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